1: Lattimore H-4 (no date) 1950 AI1 Sinkiang AI1

423 efficient use of draft animals, and it is a problem how to employ efficiently, on a tiny farm, the labor potential of the large Uighur family.

Trade and Finance

439 487 Today as throughout the past the biggest share of Sinkiang's trade is with territories to the west rather than with China, which lies to the east. In trade with Sinkiang the Soviet Union has inherited an advantage created by geography. The richest parts of Sinkiang lie along the western frontier, and goods from these districts can reach the Soviet Union by relatively easy trade routes. It will be difficult to change the circuit of trade even by building rail and road communications with China, because these new trade routes would have to cross many hundred miles of barren land in which there are no markets and no pay loads to be picked up.

438 174 Both farming and herding contribute to the trade of Sinkiang. Theoretically, both oasis farmers and steppe or alpine herdsmen can live without trade. Each way of life is capable, at a pinch, of providing everything that is needed to sustain the community. Historically, however, no long-continued period of "pinch" of this kind can be identified. There are proofs of trade from the Neolithic Age onward. In practice, only farmers and herdsmen who are so poor that they have no surplus whatever to sell are "pure" farmers and herdsmen. When the Chinese first came to Sinkiang in the Han Dynasty, the annals record that they found trade between oases: the little "kingdoms" of Shan-shan (near Lob Nor), Pu-li, and I-nai drew grain from the larger oases of Charchen, Yarkand, and Kashgar. Since oases like Charklik and Turfan frequently fell under the rule of the nomad Hsiungnu, there must

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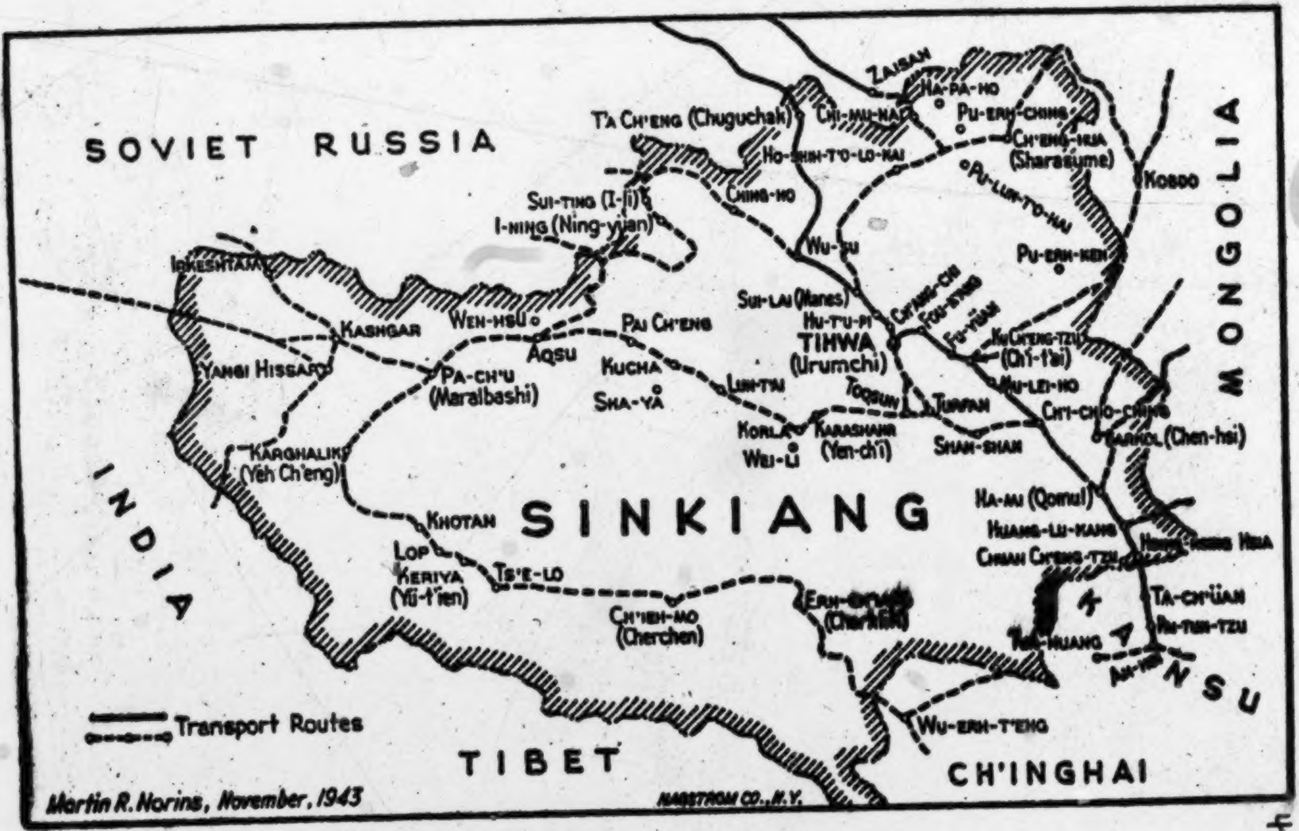
wheat, 25 of barley, or 26 of corn. The field survey just quoted showed that the average size of farm cultivated by one household was 25.8 *charaks*, the largest 100 *charaks*, and the smallest six. Measurement on the spot indicated that one *charak* of seed would sow about .18 acres, so that the average size of farm in these villages worked out at four and a half acres.

2: Norins S-4 (1939-1941) 1944 All Sinkiang All

[p. 31]


SOVIET RUSSIA
MONGOLIA
INDIA
TIBET
CH'INGHAI
KANSU
SINKIANG
ZAISAN
HA-PA-HO
T'A CH'ENG (Chuguchak)
CHI-MU-NAI
PU-ERH-CHING
CH'ENG-HUA (Sharasume)
HO-SHIH-T'O-LO-KAI
KOBDO
PU-LUN-TO-HAI
SUI-TING (I-li)
CHING-HO
I-NING (Ning-yüan)
WU-SU
PU-ERH-KEN
IRKESHTAM
SUI-LAI (Manes)
CH'ANG-CHI
FOU-K'ANG
HU-T'U-PI
FU-YÜAN
WEN-HSU
PAI CH'ENG
TIHWA (Urumchi)
KU CH'ENG-TZU (Ch'i-t'ai)
KASHGAR
AQSU
MU-LEI-HO
YANGI HISSAR
PA-CH'U (Maralbashi)
KUCHA
LUN-TAI
TOQSUN
TURFAN
SHA-YA
CH'I-CH'IO-CHING
KORLA
KARASHAHR (Yen-ch'i)
SHAN-SHAN
BARKOL (Chen-hsi)
WEI-LI
KARGHALIK (Yeh Ch'eng)
HA-MI (Qomul)
KHOTAN
HUANG-LU-KANG
HSING-HSING HSIA
LOP
CHUAN CH'ENG-TZU
KERIYA (Yü-t'ien)
TS'E-LO
ERH-SHIH-LI (Charkhlik)
TA-CH'ÜAN
CH'IEH-MO (Cherchen)
TUN-HUANG
AN-HSI
WU-ERH-T'ENG
Transport Routes
Martin R. Norins, November, 1943
HAGSTROM CO., N.Y.

487

487 Sinkiang, "farther than any country from the sea," was once traversed by an old trans-Eurasian Silk Road. Medieval caravans, of Marco Polo's time and before, threaded their way laboriously along it in almost endless lines bearing goods from West to East and back. First high over the jagged Karakorum and Pamir Mountains, then in a gradual winding descent, went the old Silk Road, and along it coursed the trade and embassies of antiquity. Once at the watered bases of Sinkiang's snow-tipped mountains, the trail became covered with string upon string of desert camels, who plodded from oasis to oasis until, past the ancient kingdom of Khotan and the waters of the now-vanished Lob Nor, they wended their way eastward out of Sinkiang to the court of old Cathay.

Advent of fifteenth-century maritime travel turned traders to the sea; and the old caravan trek lost its one-time prominence. Central Asia, which had served as a natural land gateway between Europe and the Orient, was left to lapse into petty internal tribulations, slumber, and finally stagnation. Not until 1931, when Japan began World War II by her invasion of Manchuria, was this remote Sinkiang hinterland at last roughly awakened.

162 Up to then Sinkiang Province was a picturesque but ill-esteemed old-style Chinese dependency, a frontier land of Central Asiatic tribesmen ruled over by a minority of "Han" Chinese officials. It was an open land of lean Kalmuck nomads and hardy Kirgiz frontiersmen, of Kazakh cowboys galloping like mad across the steppes, of rugged mountains and luxuriant oases and ancient ruins buried in the Takla Makan, a land of mosques and lamaseries and century-old irrigation ditches, of "Turban Heads" and Tungkans; in short, a land of perhaps the most colorful mixture of race and custom and habitat that ever did exist. Market day in a bazaar might find dark bearded Uighurs from Kashgar in long, bright-colored coats together with veiled and white-cloaked women, a crowd which perhaps would include booted Kirgiz, so-called Aryan Sarikolis from the Taghdumbash Pamir, perhaps outcast unveiled Dulani women from Maralbashi, and a scattering of foreigners from Afghanistan, India, and Russian Turkestan.

000 Like all frontiersmen, the people of Sinkiang are given to tall tales.

Manchu position in China as a whole, as well as to the physical limitations set by the necessary journey. 439

The Convenience Factor

Traditional routes from China Proper into Sinkiang not only have always been fraught with danger and difficulty, but they have also been excessively long. Negotiation by primitive means of some 1,500 miles of hard travel over desert and mountain areas formerly was required for the journey from Pei-p'ing to Tihwa; there were, in addition, the following distances from Tihwa to selected outlying Sinkiang trade centers near the Russian and Indian frontiers: 487

Sui-ting (Kuldja)	360	miles
T'a Ch'eng (Chuguchak)	375	"
Aqsu	927	"
Kashgar	1,375	"
Khotan	1,644	"

Yet, compare those distances with the mileage along main trade routes by which there was travel from modern communication centers in Russia to key points in Sinkiang. A French writer, M. Castagné, has shown that from:

Andizhan to Kashgar by Irkeshtam through Terek Pass is	427	miles
Pishpek (Frunze) to Kashgar by Narinsk through Chatir Köl is	346	"
Alma-Ata to Sui-ting (Kuldja) by Khorgos is	534	"
Semipalatinsk to Chuguchak (T'a Ch'eng) by Sergiopol is	400	"
Zaisan to Sharasume is	160	"
Zaisan to Chuguchak is	160	"

M. Castagné also points out how the Russians were economically favored over even the British when he explains that from Leh, in Northwest India—along a customary British trade route—it is respectively 460, 530, and 619 miles to such key commercial points of South Sinkiang as Karghalik, Khotan, and Keriya. The British routes, besides, went over some of the most difficult mountain passes in the

487 world, some replete with blizzards and terrific heights; at least one over 18,000 feet.

These remarks show, without need of further elaboration, that the main centers of Sinkiang have been relatively much more convenient to centers of Russian Central Asia than to those of British India or, to a much greater extent, those of Eastern China. They also show how Russia's favored geographical position could shortly turn Sinkiang trade in her favor.

The Emergence of Tsarist Leadership

439 For a generation the Tsarist Government had wielded considerable commercial influence in the Kashgar region of South Sinkiang; and the proximity of the Russian Turkestan railways and highways was felt only less by degree in the Altai and T'ien Shan areas of North Sinkiang. According to Gabitov, a Soviet writer, a real shift toward Russia in Sinkiang trade came in the period immediately following the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Up to then nearly all the wool of Tihwa and Tarbagatai (T'a Ch'eng) had gone into Tientsin across Su-chou and Lan-chou. But in 1905 the freight prices jumped, and Tientsin imports of Sinkiang wool were diminished. This started a shift which took the goods from Tihwa across the Chinese-Russian border to Semipalatinsk and on to the east coast of Asia via the Trans-Siberian Railway. This export route made good use of the relatively comfortable trek from Tihwa to the Russian border via the Manas River valley. In the early years of the twentieth century this avenue of trade became the most important for Sinkiang. Large and small livestock and raw materials for Russia herself also went this way, but some other Sinkiang products—cotton, silks, and a certain amount of wool from the Khotan, Keriya, and Yarkand areas farther south—entered Russia along the Kashgar-Irkeshtam-Osh road. In return Russia sent Sinkiang finished manufactures, silks, iron (including plated and rimmed iron), barred steel, earthenware, perfumes, and sugar. Henceforth, with the exception of the earliest period of Soviet government in Russia, Sinkiang-Russian economic bonds gradually grew stronger. By 1930 Soviet engineers had completed the Turksib Railway, which reached almost

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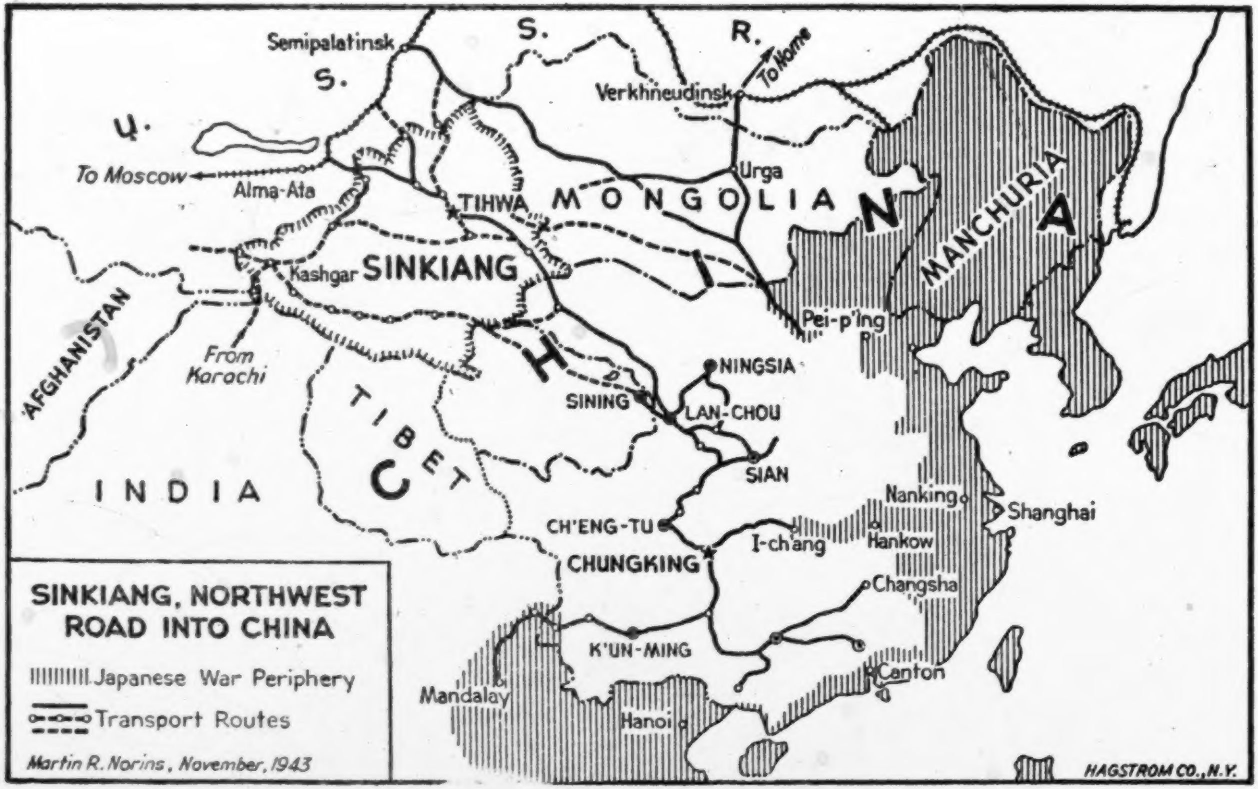
2: Norins S-4 (1939-1941) 1944 All Sinkiang All

[p. 123]



SINKIANG, NORTHWEST ROAD INTO CHINA

▥ Japanese War Periphery

⊶ Transport Routes

Martin R. Norins, November, 1943

HAGSTROM CO., N.Y.

U. S. S. R.
Semipalatinsk
Verkhneudinsk
To Rome
To Moscow
Alma-Ata
Urga
TIHWA
MONGOLIA
MANCHURIA
SINKIANG
Kashgar
AFGHANISTAN
From Karachi
TIBET
CHINA
INDIA
Pei-p'ing
NINGSIA
SINING
LAN-CHOU
SIAN
CH'ENG-TU
CHUNGKING
I-ch'ang
Nanking
Shanghai
Hankow
Changsha
K'UN-MING
Canton
Mandalay
Hanoi

000 ply problem. Until a large part of Southeast Asia is cleared of danger from Japan, reopening of the Burma Road probably not only is not imminent but even loses a great deal of its value. It is well to look elsewhere at present for the route along which large-scale supply to China may be maintained.

The Siberia-Outer Mongolia-Ningsia Route

The shortest and most direct potential route th[illegible] United Nations zones from North America to China is that via Canada, Alaska, and Siberia to Chinese Ningsia. Some 6,500 miles long, it extends from Seattle to Alaska, then across the narrow Bering Strait, and along the Trans-Siberian Railway as far as Verkhneudinsk (Ulan Ude). At Verkhneudinsk, in Siberia, it branches southward through Ulan Bator, capital of the "Mongolian People's Republic," to Ningsia. The Ulan Bator (Urga) to Ningsia part of this route, according to available information, before Pearl Harbor was still little more than a desert camel trail. It has been, besides, vulnerable at the Ningsia end, since 1937, to an ever-threatening Japanese push through Suiyüan Province.

The Sinkiang Routes

487 Remaining routes now geographically practicable enter China through Sinkiang. One such, an extension of the above-mentioned Siberian route, runs along or on the Trans-Siberian Railway beyond Verkhneudinsk and, utilizing the Turksib Railway, reaches Alma-Ata, in Soviet Kazakhstan. From there it crosses back eastward into Sinkiang via Sui-ting or T'a Ch'eng, and passes on the modern Sinkiang-Kansu motor road toward Chungking and the Chinese war fronts. This route, probably under 9,000 miles in all, deserves primary attention. It utilizes already existing modern transport facilities and, with the exception of possible political obstacles, might become a very useful supplementary avenue for United Nations supplies into the China area.

American goods can also obtain entrance into Sinkiang from the Middle East and India. Delivery requires a long ocean journey—one which runs from the eastern coast of the United States to the Persian Gulf or the Arabian Sea. But once the long maritime part of the trip is complete, shipments into China are quite feasible. Two routes have gained special public attention, one through Persia (Iran) and the other through India. The first begins at the Persian Gulf port of Bushire, in Iran, and runs by road and rail to Bandar Shah on the Caspian Sea. Once the Caspian is crossed by boat, the goods can be loaded on freight cars and carried by rail from Krasnovodsk to Alma-Ata, but a short distance by good highway from Sinkiang. The other route starts at Karachi, Indian port on the Arabian Sea, and runs by rail to Peshawar, then by road from Peshawar to Kabul in Afghanistan and north through Termez to Samarkand in Soviet Uzbekistan. From Samarkand the goods, again, can be shipped by rail to Alma-Ata and then by highway into Sinkiang. 487

Further major possibilities for United Nations transport into Sinkiang include the well-tested pack trails into Kashgaria (South Sinkiang) from Kashmir (Northwest India) and from Afghanistan. One of the most desirable of these routes, that passing through Kashmir, utilizes the cities of Karachi and Srinagar and covers some 4,500 miles of India-China terrain. Crossing 18,000-foot passes, these trails are not yet feasible for motorized transport, though they have long been used for caravan trade. There is, however, no serious physical obstacle (other than possibly the altitude limits of airplane flight) to air transport from Srinagar, for instance, (or from Kabul), over the Karakorum Mountains (or Pamirs) to Kashgaria. From Kashgaria there is already available roadbed for motor travel on the old Sinkiang South Road to Tihwa or to other parts of Sinkiang, and from there into China Proper.

With the Nazis now boxed up in Europe and with the Mediterranean open, sea shipments to the Middle East now need not (though they still can) take the long haul by way of the Cape of Good Hope; they are able, instead, to go directly—say, New York-Port Said and then across Syria and Iraq to Iran. But up to only recently adequate preparations for passage of goods to China through Iran and Soviet Russia may not have been completed. An Associated Press dispatch from Chungking dated July 5, 1943, cited Chinese Minister of Communications Tseng Yang-fu as declaring that "at last" arrangements had been concluded for use of this supply line. Yet Tseng even then 000

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

CHAPTER IV

THE MOUNTAIN ROAD TO CATHAY

THE name Tashqurghan means in Turki " stone fort ", 101
and the place is probably identical with the *λίθινος*
πύργος of which Ptolemy speaks as having been the
extreme western emporium of Serikē (China). At that time
it was called by the Chinese Hopanto and was the capital
of the frontier district of that name.[1] Now once more it is
the headquarters of the Chinese Amban of Pu-li or Sariqol,
who rules a long strip of country along the eastern rim of
the Pamir plateau. Sariqol was made into an administrative [631]
district at the beginning of the present century, when it came
into prominence from the Chinese point of view owing to the
occupation of the neighbouring Pamirs by Russia. For [648]
years, indeed, the Tsar's Government kept a detachment of
infantry at Tashqurghan, regardless of the fact that it was [712]
Chinese territory; the solid mud-brick fort built by them is
still in good repair though it has been empty since its evacuation
in 1920 by the last remnants of the former Cossack
garrison of the Pamirs. Ethnically, the district is interesting 162
as being populated in about equal proportions by two contrasting
races. These are, firstly, the Tajiks, who are remarkably
pure specimens of the original *Homo alpinus* stock and have
inhabitated this remote corner of High Asia since the dawn of
history; secondly, the Kirghiz. These latter belong to the
tribe called by the Russians Kara-Kazak; they are the
southernmost branch of the great Kirghiz race, and they can
only live as far south as the Pamirs, the immense elevation of
which makes up for the low latitude and produces a climate
as rigorous as that of the Steppes.

Two entirely different routes, each about ten marches in 487
length, connect Tashqurghan with Kashgar. The one usually
followed in summer is the eastern or Chichiklik route which,

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[1] Stein, " Sand-buried Ruins of Khotan," pp. 71-2.

•487 after crossing four passes between 12,000 and 16,000 feet high and traversing three different valleys sparsely inhabited by Kirghiz, debouches upon the great plain of Central Asia near the flourishing town of Yangi Hissar. The winter route goes north from Tashqurghan over the easy Ulugh Rabat Pass (circ. 13,500 feet) to the Rangkul Pamir, past the beautiful lakes of Little Qarakul and Basikul, and then down through the tremendous gorge of the Gez River which cuts through the Kashgar Range between the great ice-clad massifs of Qungur (25,146 feet) and Chakragil (22,180 feet). It comes out on to the Kashgarian plain at Tashmalik, whence the city is reached in two marches.

131 Sariqol is about the most unpopular district among Chinese officials in all Eastern Turkistan. Its capital is 10,250 feet [132] above the sea and has a climate which may be described as three months spring and nine months winter; most of the ten days' journey from the nearest civilization has to be [181] performed on horseback instead of in the Peking cart beloved of the travelling Celestial; last but not least, the inhabitants are an unruly lot, very different from the timid and peaceable Turkis of the plains. Small wonder then that the Governor of Chinese Turkistan at Urumchi has the utmost difficulty in finding men for the post. But he does find them, and what is more he removes and replaces them if (as may be expected sometimes in a place so remote from supervision) they misbehave themselves; a fact which throws a remarkable light upon the effectiveness of Governor Yang's control over a district which is no less than two months' journey from his headquarters.

133 But though the Ambans may regard themselves as Ugolinos condemned to an Inferno of cold, the summer visitor to Tashqurghan will find much that is pleasing in the marvellous clearness and purity of its air, its spacious greensward threaded with pellucid streams and the beautiful shapes of the mountains which stand in glittering ranks all round, yet not too near it. Conspicuous among these is Muz Tagh Ata, " Father of the Ice Mountains," blazing in all its mighty mass of whiteness over the vivid green of the meadows. Though it is 24,388 feet high, the enormous width of Muz Tagh Ata detracts from its beauty as a mountain, and it does not compare for a moment with Rakaposhi or Nanga Parbat; but its very size is impressive, and the vast extent of its snowfields and glaciers, the whiteness of which has an intense

said the little boy, " why does the Sahib wear a lamb's tummy 522 on his head ? " The problem of supplies was not so difficult 563 as we had expected. Milk, cream and butter were always to be had from the Kirghiz, but we only once or twice got eggs and never a chicken. At the shop of the one Hindu *bunnia* at Tashqurghan D. was able to replenish her store of flour, oil, dried fruits, walnuts and matches for the onward journey.

On 9th July we left Tashqurghan in state, our caravan now 574 consisting of 17 ponies and one donkey. The Amban made amends for having ignored our arrival by arranging an elaborate *chah-jan* or farewell tea-drinking, combined with a parade of the entire garrison of Tashqurghan. This took place by the road-side about a mile from the bazaar. In the three-walled mud hut used for these ceremonies D. and I sat on the edge of a platform on each side of a wooden tray containing a china bowl of green tea for each of us, and two or three saucers of currants, almonds and strange Chinese confectionery tasting mostly of dust. On one side of the interior of the " reception-pavilion " sat the Amban and O.C. Tashqurghan, on the other G. and our Aqsaqal, while the Turki-speaking interpreter, standing, did his best with the Aqsaqal to keep the very sticky conversational ball rolling between us and the Chinese. The parade consisted of about thirty men and four enormous red banners ; the drill was most successful, until an unexpected evolution had to be performed in connexion with the photograph I took of the army, which caused the O.C. to march and counter-march his troops over half the area under his command before he finally got them to face the camera. Farewells and much hand-shaking completed the proceedings. It may be mentioned here that when a Chinaman shakes hands, he shakes his own hand, the other person doing the same opposite him, both parties bowing deeply the while.

Escaped at last from ceremonial, we revelled once more in 487 an exhilarating canter over the grassy pamir ; past Tiznaf and Chashman, groups of tiny farmsteads, each with its willow-clump, standing amid wide fields of corn and rich pasture ; past bend after bend of the river, running clear as crystal through the meadows with many a fine pool, a possible trout-stream wickedly wasted in unstocked emptiness.

Leaving the Sariqol valley ten miles north of Tashqurghan we mounted steadily for five hours and camped at 12,300 feet in the narrow Darshart ravine. Next day we crossed the

● 467 Kök Moinak pass (15,400 feet) which was quite free of snow. There was only one serious obstacle on the way up, and that was within a couple of miles of the Darshart camping-place. The path had been entirely washed away by the stream, which cascaded for a hundred yards between perpendicular walls, and it was further partially blocked by masses of ice jutting out over the stream-bed. It took us, working hard, over an hour to get the caravan up through these narrows. Our camp that night, at 14,500 feet on the Chichiklik (" speckled," i.e. flowery) plateau, was the highest we had yet had.

From Chichiklik the shortest route to Toilebulung is down through the Tangitar or " Dark Gorge," which from all accounts is well named, so narrow and dark is it and so rough and boulder-strewn the stream-bed. In the high-water season it is dangerous, and we preferred to go two marches round by the Yambulak *Jilgha* (valley). On the way we crossed the Yangi Davan (New Pass) the top of which was covered with wide but firm-surfaced snow-fields and proved to be 16,100 feet above the sea. This was the highest pass we crossed between Srinagar and Kashgar. From the top, to our surprise and delight, we saw below us to the north a beautiful lake of purest sapphire lapped in the snowy peaks at the head of the Yambulak valley. This lake is not shown on any map; it is quite half a mile broad and when we saw it was still, owing to the great elevation (15,500 feet), partially covered with the ice of winter.

In the Yambulak Jilgha we made our first acquaintance with unspoilt, off-the-beaten-track Kirghiz of the type we were afterwards to know and like so well. Five miles down [622] from the pass, in the middle of one of the sudden but short-lived summer blizzards of the Pamirs, we found the headman of the little community, Ibrahim Beg, and his son Juma waiting [272] for us with tea and a small carpet spread out on the wet ground. Politeness dictated a halt of at least five minutes while we [263] made a pretence of sipping the salty tea (the Kirghiz cannot afford sugar in their tea, so they use salt, though they much prefer their tea sweet) and felt the snowflakes insinuating themselves down our necks. Two miles further down at a height of 12,650 feet, we came to the *aq-ois*, pitched on either side of the brawling stream in a sheltered bend of the valley. The afternoon sun now shone strongly again, and as we passed the first huts its rays illumined exquisitely an idyllic scene—three or four Kirghiz girls in their quaint dresses and turbans

● 487 milking the sheep and goats by the water's edge while the men and children looked on.

[231] Next morning we awoke to find a brilliant sun shining on a cheerful scene composed of yaks, yak-calves, donkeys, ponies, sheep, goats, curly-headed children, rainbow-clothed white-turbaned women and one to two shaggy men (the rest were still in bed), against a background of fat mushroom-like *aq-ois*, foaming river and steep green hill-side. I had decided to halt a day at this pleasant spot, partly to give the caravan a rest, partly in order to reconnoitre on foot a pass called the Merki Davan by which I hoped to cross into the upper Qaratash valley and thus gain access to one of the blank patches on the map which Sir Aurel Stein had advised me to explore. To cut a long story short,[1] Gerard Price and I, assisted by Juma Beg with his men and yaks, reached a height of 16,500 feet on a snowy spur, from which point we could see that the "pass" was quite out of the question for our caravan. It was nothing but a lofty ridge of rock at least 17,000 feet high, deep in snow even on the south side and defended also by steep ice-slopes.

[758] Meanwhile D. passed a strenuous but amusing day with the Kirghiz ladies, all of whom clamoured (mostly quite unnecessarily) for medical treatment and seemed to appreciate presents of quinine tabloids and castor oil even more than the beads and other small gifts which D. had brought for them. At any rate, she made herself very popular, for next morning when we marched down the valley their farewells were most affectionate and they walked at her stirrup quite a long way down the valley. One of the younger ones was perfectly lovely; the coloured sketch of her which was done by D. on this occasion and is reproduced as a frontispiece to this book does not flatter her unduly. As a rule, however, the faces of the Kirghiz women, though broad-browed and pleasing, are too flat for beauty.

[37] As we filed down the Yambulak valley it became ever narrower and its sides higher and steeper. The profusion of wild flowers was a revelation; anemones, primulas, king-cups, columbines, antirrhinums, campanulas, asphodel and many others of which we did not know the names grew in masses, especially in places where the sheep and goats could not get at them. Cascades of wild roses grew out of every

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[1] For an account of this climb, see "Geographical Journal," November, 1925, p. 388.

• 487 cranny in the perpendicular rocks. Among the very few people we saw was an interesting figure; this was the Qazi or native judge of Koserab on his way with three or four men on horses to Tashqurghan, whither he had been summoned by the Amban to try cases according to the Shar'iat or law of the Qur'an. The party forded the river just before meeting us, a picturesque sight; the white-bearded old village judge, with his book of *dala'il* (precedents) and his Qur'an wrapped in a cloth under his arm, rode straight-backed and vigorous at the head of his following.

[221] [164] That night (14th July) we camped in wild and grand, but less green and flowery, country at Toilebulung, the winter headquarters of the Yambulak Kirghiz who grow their crops there and bury their dead in curious little domed mausolea. The elevation was only 9,650 feet, the first time we had been down to four figures since Gircha in the Hunza valley, sixteen days before. We mopped our brows and complained of the stuffiness of these low-lying valleys, until some one pointed out that we were still far higher up than the most elevated Indian hill-station.

432 [431] Next day we bid adieu to the Yambulak Kirghiz with many invitations and promises to visit them again one day. I had already given old Ibrahim Beg with much ceremony an official present in the shape of a watch. Just before leaving I discovered that he had already disposed of it to Hafiz for five taels (about 15*s*.). As it was only worth about four taels, and as I wanted to impress upon the Kirghiz the enormity of the insult to the British Empire, I publicly reproved Ibrahim, took back the watch, made him repay the 5 taels to Hafiz, and then gave him a cash present of 4 taels instead of the watch. I then, supposing that Hafiz really wanted a watch to tell the time by, sold him the Government watch for 4 taels. The following day one of the other orderlies told me that Ibrahim had bought back the watch from Hafiz for 4½ taels, evidently thinking that as there was such a to-do about the article, it must be a good investment. It was not till after we reached Kashgar, however, that I heard the sequel from Harding, who passed Yambulak two days after us. This was that Ibrahim Beg changed his mind once more about the watch and sold it to Harding's orderly for 3½ taels! Turkis and Kirghiz alike are born traders and would sell the noses off their faces if they could get good money for them.

487 On each of the next two days we crossed passes, the Ter

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

Art (13,340 feet) and the Kashka Su (12,900 feet) respectively. 487 They were very much alike; winding ravines among high rocky hills; a glen thickly carpeted with alpine flowers, narrowing and steepening as we ascended it; a last back-breaking ascent, and then the col, a rounded ridge with out-cropping rocks and turf enamelled with tiny blooms. We lingered long on the Kashka Su; we had been travelling over or among mountains for such an age—a golden age—that it was difficult to believe that we were crossing our very last pass. From the summit we looked with interest towards the north, hoping to see the plains of Kashgaria spread out below us, but as far as the eye could reach lay a jumble of green ridges surmounted here and there by a snow-flecked crag and deeply seamed by silver torrents, the music of which floated gently up to us. Behind us to the south and south-east a magnificent array of giant peaks, the little-known mountains of the Upper Yarkand River valley, bounded the horizon with walls of cliff and glacier.

Descending steeply for 1,500 feet over meadows covered with asphodel we found a small tent pitched for us and a way-side tea-drinking prepared by a delightful ~~old~~ Father Christmas of a Beg called Mirza Ahmad Beg of Taumtara, a side-glen to the north-west. We greeted our host in the tent and were at 574 once confronted with a mountainous collation of freshly-killed 262 and exceedingly tough mutton, leather-like bread, a kind of oily and very indigestible pastry and tea with salt in it. Being fortunately left to ourselves with this repast, we were able, ostensibly at any rate, to do our duty as guests by disposing of quite a large quantity of the food; this we effected by the simple process of eating our own sandwiches and putting the Beg's viands in the haversack thus emptied. Meanwhile the Beg's wife and sister, who must have heard of D.'s fame from Yambulak, were round the corner in gorgeous robes and exaggerated Kirghiz head-dresses, awaiting their opportunity. As we emerged from the tent after our deceitful meal, we saw them in all their glory crossing the stream on their ponies, a picturesque sight. A lengthy interview with D. in the tent followed, while I talked to the old Beg outside. When the ladies had at last finished sampling D.'s medicinal stock and wisdom (for that is what they had really come after), we continued on our way. D. said that they had been rather 487 heavy on hand and had no small-talk; they gave her the impression of being *mazlum-kishis* indeed (I may explain that

● 487 *mazlum-kishi* is the Turki for " woman " and means literally " oppressed person "). However, small-talk is not so neces- [114] sary when you have plenty of diseases, as these oppressed ones apparently had, and D. scored another social success. A couple of hours later we were settling into comfortable *aq-ois* provided by Father Christmas on a meadow by the Kinkol [137] River. Near by grew many mushrooms, a rare treat. On the mountain-sides all round we could hear the red-legged par- [139] tridges calling ; I accepted their invitation, and a brace of them soon graced our camp larder. I may mention that between Yambulak and Kichik Karaul not a day passed that we did not bag partridges or hares, or both, for the pot. Next day I had a misfortune in the shape of a nasty fall with the black horse, which came down suddenly at the trot and threw me on to a sharp stone, which bruised my thigh somewhat severely, causing me to faint twice with the pain. I rode the rest of the march (and the two following days) on a yak or pony with my leg in a sling, neither a comfortable nor a rapid mode of progression. This delayed us very much and we took a day longer to get into Kashgar than we would otherwise have done.

Further down the valley became very wild and rugged, and raging glacier-torrents from the Qizil Tagh or " Red Mountains " on our right had to be crossed as well as the main stream. Here, at a place called Sasik Tika, we noticed a single poverty-stricken *aq-oi*. I distinctly remember commenting on the sinister look of the valley at this point. I was reminded of this the following spring, when I was present at the trial by the Magistrate of Yangi Hissar of the Kirghiz to whom the *aq-oi* belonged for the murder of a Chitrali traveller.[1]

137 Soon after leaving the next camp, Toqoi Bashi, the first real trees we had seen since Tashqurghan appeared, and after that we were never without some. Short, thick-set trees they were, with fluted bark and small, pointed leaves ; further down the valley some of them attained great size. We did not then know to what species they belonged, but they afterwards became very familiar. They were the desert poplar (*P. varifolia*, Turki *toghraq*) which is the characteristic tree of the Tarim Basin and, outside the oases, the only one that grows at all freely.

487 That night we camped at the first settled village of Kashgaria, Kichik Qaraul or " The Little Fort " It was pleasant to sit on the grass and munch juicy melons, nectarines and

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[1] For an account of this trial, see Ch. X.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

peaches while we watched the sunset glow fade upon rich fields of maize and peas, on cosy little farms nestling under clumps of tall bushy poplars and on warm yellow river-bluffs along the foot of which springs of pure water bubbled up among the meadows. 487 ●

By mid-day on 18th July the hills on either side of us had sunk to insignificance and we came to a place where the Chinese of former days had built, *more suo*, a wall across the open valley, a wall the ends of which were quite in the air, and which could never have been defensible, even when first built. Here, at a small mediæval-looking fort called Chong (Big) Qaraul, an amiable Chinese Muhammadan *qaraulchi* or barrier officer fed us on melons and apricots on a platform under spreading planes. Before us extended a vast indefinite expanse, pale yellow and brown with wide shadows lying on it where the oases were ; nearest to us, a long line of trees some ten miles away marked Ighiz Yar, our halting-place. We thrilled to think that we were looking upon the great plain of Central Asia, the mighty belt of oasis-fringed desert which stretches for 2,000 miles from Kashgar to the mountains of Inner Mongolia. [712]

Ighiz Yar ("The High Bluff") proved to be a pleasant stretch of cultivated land dotted with farmsteads of mud-brick joined by leafy lanes down which ran brooks of clear water. Except that the soil was obviously far more fertile—the loess of Kashgaria is as a matter of fact one of the most fertile soils in the world—it might have been a Persian village. Our lodging proved to be a small house near the lower end of the oasis, consisting of one very large room with a raised floor and a large square skylight, and a small windowless room opening out of it. There was a third chamber, but this was not available as the entire family moved into it when we took possession ; as their ingress and egress was through the big room, the privacy of the latter left something to be desired. Our two rooms opened on to a courtyard in which (as the house boasted no garden) our retinue took up their quarters ; they also opened on a cow-byre. 342 [134]

Harding caught us up at Ighiz Yar, and next day all four of us went on together to Yangi Hissar. The (Hindu) British Aqsaqal of the place, a wealthy Shikarpuri banker called Ratan Chand, sent a smart buggy to meet us half-way, and in this D. and I, drawn by the fieriest of Ferghana stallions, performed the rest of the march in what must surely have 487

been record time. Gerard's pony also tried to break the flat-racing
● 487 record for Kashgaria on this stretch, with the result that
four miles out of Suget we came up with G. standing ruefully
by his steed and holding half of one of its hoofs in his hand ; it
had put its foot into a hole, split its hoof, crossed its legs and
turned head over heels all at once, it appeared. Fortunately
the ground was soft. In a leafy suburb of Yangi Hissar we
were welcomed with mounds of toffee, melons of vast size and
many loyal speeches by the Indian Shylocks of the town.
622 Further on the District Magistrate and the Commandant of
the Garrison met us and we went through the formality of the
official tea-drinking. The Amban was a complete contrast to
him of Tashqurghan ; he was a stout, clean-shaven, intelligent
type of person, rather like a mediæval monk. He had once,
he told us, been a student at the Peking law-schools and
291 had served as a judge somewhere on the coast. The Celestial
effect of his black satin coat and his cream-coloured silk skirt
covering close-fitting white calico trousers was somewhat
spoilt by a bowler hat which had seen better days.

Escorted by the local soldiery we moved slowly in procession
487 into Yangi Hissar. It was a relief to enter the cool, dustless
streets of the bazaars, which here are not domed as in Persia
[443] but roofed after a fashion with sacking and wattles. The
shops struck us as neater and cleaner than those of India
or Persia, the counters of the many food-shops, fruiterers,
butchers, etc., being well scrubbed. The Chinese shops are
particularly neat and tidy, and reminded one of village
" general shops " at home.

Hardly had we arrived at the garden of the empty Swedish
574 Mission bungalow when the Amban and Commandant,
most courteously according to Chinese ideas, came to call.
Fortunately the Aqsaqal had prepared tea and a noble spread
of fruit and sweets. During this function we were treated to
a little bit of Chinese servants' manners which very nearly
upset our equilibrium for good and all. When he sat down,
the Amban took off his bowler and handed it to his servant,
who stood behind his chair. The servant, who already wore
a decrepit Homburg, took the Amban's hat and coolly,
as if it were the most natural thing to do with it, clapped it on
top of his own ! During the rest of the meal we all had to
keep our eyes firmly averted from the two-hatted servant,
for anything more ludicrous than the sight of his solemn,
old-family-butler face surmounted by the Amban's seedy

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

bowler and his own archaic Homburg, one on top of the other, 574 cannot be imagined.

We thought we were going to have the comfortable Mission house to sleep in, but it appeared that owing to a mistake the keys had not been obtained from the missionaries at Kashgar, who are kind enough always to put the house at the disposal of the Consulate if required. Nothing else having been arranged we had eventually to doss down in a small farm-house on the outskirts of the town. It was not very comfortable, but we made the best of it and by half-past six I was able to change my clothes and drive round to call on the Amban, the Commandant and an ex-Amban who was still living in the town. In almost every district we visited in 622 our subsequent wanderings we found one, sometimes two, ex-Ambans. Apparently it takes months, even years, to hand over charge, owing presumably to the mess in which each Magistrate gets his work, particularly the financial side of it. So much so, I believe, that it is the custom in China for his friends to congratulate an official formally on the successful handing 574 over of his charge. Next day before proceeding on our journey, we attended an official lunch at the Yamen, where we were received with much pomp and ceremony including a salute of three "guns," or rather bangs from small mortars stuck upright in the ground. The decorations of the room in which [353] we lunched, though faded, were in excellent taste; red chairs covered with black silk; a few panels of decorative Chinese writing; windows of a kind of fretwork in chaste geometrical designs, with ancient lace instead of glass, and little else in the room beyond the table. A Chinese feast is so long and complicated an affair that it merits more detailed description than I can afford it here, and I must therefore refer the reader to a later chapter.[1] Suffice it to say that we were as much impressed by the courtesy and considerateness of our host as by the fearful tinned and dried delicacies from China Proper such as shark's fin, sea-slugs, fish-entrails, seaweed and bamboo-root on which he appeared to pride himself most. All these *plats* seemed to us to consist of substances either glutinous or messy, or both, and to taste of nothing in particular.

Wayside tea-drinkings similar to those of the day before, 487 but in the reverse order, heralded our departure from Yangi Hissar in a landau kindly sent out for us from Kashgar by the Taoyin. Twenty miles of perfectly flat country, alternating between rich cultivation and howling wilderness in the true Central Asian fashion, brought us to the village of Yapchan just before dark. Here we were somewhat depressed to find that instead of the house and garden we had been promised, we were to spend the night in two or three tiny, unventilated rooms in a very small and dirty public *serai*. It appeared that the owner of the house at which Europeans usually stay had inconsiderately died just before our arrival. Half the loafers and children of Yapchan enjoyed an excellent close-up view of the three of us unpacking, dining and going to bed. Next morning D. said that she had not been by any means the only occupant of her room ; she counted, I think, seventy-one others.

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[1] See Ch. VI, pp. 82–84.

On 21st July, 1922, we rode and drove the last 24 miles to Old Kashgar. Some three miles out we were met with an elaborate wayside reception by Mr. Fitzmaurice, the outgoing Vice-Consul who had been holding charge of the Consulate General pending my arrival, supported by the office staff, the Aqsaqal and other British subjects of Kashgar. A mile further and we were being greeted at a pleasant pavilion among willow-groves by the Chinese officials, representatives of the Swedish missionaries and the Russian colony, and others. Here we were entertained at an excellently-cooked and almost European lunch by the friendly and genial Taoyin of Kashgar, after which we listened and replied to speeches of welcome in various unfamiliar tongues. A long and dusty procession through bazaars and surburbs brought us late in the afternoon to " Chini Bagh," by which name the British Consulate General is locally known.

Our journey from Srinagar had occupied 49 days from Srinagar, including eight days' halts on the road. We could have done it easily enough in, say, forty-two, but we should not have enjoyed it nearly as much as we did. Including the value of stores consumed on the road, but not the wages and travelling allowances of private servants and Government orderlies, the cost according to the careful accounts I kept worked out at £120 for the three of us—much less than I had expected.

600 about the Kirghiz, and that little uncomplimentary; this is probably because the Kirghiz living on main routes become sophisticated by contact with the outside world, and in their dealings with travellers of all kinds and with their Chinese masters develop qualities such as greed and untruthfulness not usually found in those inhabiting almost inaccessible valleys off the beaten track.

We carried out one more small reconnaissance before
•487 leaving the hills, exploring a side-glen a mile below Khanterek called the Achiq Jilgha, so named from a copious spring of water impregnated with carbonic acid which it contains. We found an excessively steep but not dangerous pass at the top leading over to a side-valley of the Gez River, a discovery of some interest as it meant that we could, if necessary, reach Kaying in the high-water season by going by the "Nine Passes" route up the Gez Valley and then crossing over into the Qaratash Valley above the Narrows. We stayed too long basking in the sun on a grassy hill-top near the summit of the pass, with the result that we were overtaken by darkness while still five miles from Saman and had an unpleasant experience picking our way in the dark among rough boulders under cliffs at the very edge of the foaming river which gleamed white and hungry in the starlight. Next day we had an uneventful march to Kampar, a pleasant village gay with autumn tints on the southern slope of a range of gravel foothills, from which we had a magnificent view of the mountains we had left behind us. The needle peaks of the Shiwakte were there and chisel-shaped Kök Döng, and towering away behind, dwarfing them all, the great white dome of Qungur.

Here Nazaroff left us, as he had to return to Kashgar. After a day's halt to rest the animals, we marched in one day 33 miles to Ighiz Yar by an unsurveyed but perfectly straightforward route. Another march, this time of 16 miles only, brought us to the dusty village of Kizil Bazar on the main Kashgar-Yarkand road. Next day we had another long ride of 28 miles across gravel desert to the first oasis of the Yarkand District, Kok Rabat, 22 miles from the city.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

Khotan, 28th November.

The name of Stein is well remembered in these parts among Turkis ooo and British subjects alike, and all antiquities other than gold brought in by the "Taklamanchis" or treasure-seekers of the Takla Makan are regarded as his property and to be kept for him. I heard many stories about the great explorer; how in the dreaded Qaranghu Tagh or "Dark Mountains" south of Khotan he bridged an abyss with wire and thus pulled himself and his party across; how in the same mountains he was laid up with frost-bite and would have perished if help had not been obtained from the Leh road, and so on. One episode, probably trivial enough if it occurred, appears to have particularly impressed the Khotanis. It is related that a domed tomb was discovered by Stein completely buried in sand, only one small aperture giving access. This was too small for Stein himself to enter, so he called for volunteers, but none of his local men dared to go in. Finally the Indian surveyor, Ram Singh, stepped (literally) into the breach. He squeezed himself in, and when he came out again some time later he was blind!

Our journey from Khotan to Keriya and back was of the 487 nature of a dash on business, and my letters contain little of interest to the general reader. The second time we visited 484 this remote part of the world, in the spring of 1924, we were able to spare some time for seeing the country and studying its people; on this occasion we travelled straight to Keriya (103 miles) in four marches, stayed there three days and returned to Khotan in another four days. We used pony transport for this trip, the desert road being too sandy for carts. We marched the first day 35 miles to a lonely desert inn called Beshtoghraq Langar, or "The Inn of the Five Desert Poplars," passing, twenty miles from Khotan, through the headquarters of the flourishing new district of Lop.

The Inn of the Five Desert Poplars proved a grubby, deso- 361 late little collection of mud hovels islanded in the sand-dunes of a belt of desert 25 miles wide; but our next halt, Chira, was a pleasant township positively buried in orchards. At this half-way house between Khotan and Keriya we were met 484 by the British Aqsaqal of the latter district, a charming, courtly Afghan of great local prestige and considerable substance called Ghulam Muhammad, who insisted on our staying in a comfortable house belonging to his Turki wife, a Chira lady. Next day, near Domoko, an amusing and instructive little incident occurred. We were hacking peacefully along ooo with Murad Qari and a couple of orderlies, when we noticed a crowd of people in the fields a couple of hundred yards from the road, and thought we would go and see what was happening.

000 487 is quite distinctive. Most of the other small towns in Kashgaria are on main routes, and witness a continual flow of through traffic; they have at least two roadside tea-drinking pavilions, one on each side of the town. Keriya on the other hand is almost, though not quite, a *cul de sac;* it is the *Ultima Thule* of Kashgaria in this direction. With the exception of the insignificant desert settlements of Niya, Charchan and Charkhliq, there is nothing but desert for 860 miles between Keriya and Tunhwang (Shachow), the westernmost town of Kansu province. The journey to Tunhwang, or Dukhan as the Turkis call it, is only practicable in winter when water can be carried by camels in the form of ice across the terrible Lop desert, which occupies most of the 450 miles between Charkhliq and Tunhwang and includes 150 miles of the salt-encrusted bed of the ancient Lop Sea. Occasionally, perhaps twice a year, a camel-caravan brings silks, tea and porcelain from China Proper to Khotan and Yarkand by this route, and returns with Khotan carpets, jade and Kashgar cotton cloth; individual traders pass to and fro between Keriya and Charchan, but on the whole it may be said that regular traffic stops at Keriya. A fine road leads into the town from the west, with an exceptionally good reception pavilion by its side; to the east, a mere country lane leads to the farms on the left bank of the Keriya River, and beyond them degenerates into a narrow track across the savannah. On this side there is no reception pavilion; no official, foreign guest or other visitor worthy of a tea-drinking ever comes to Keriya from the east.

000 While in Keriya we stayed at the Aqsaqal's comfortable house in the middle of the town. My work with the Amban left little time for sight-seeing. Judging by the behaviour of the inhabitants, indeed, the chief sight to be seen in Keriya while we were there was ourselves. One soon becomes accustomed to gaping crowds of onlookers in the remoter parts of Central Asia; but the curiosity of the Kerialiks passed all bounds. The place appeared to kave knocked off work for the duration of our visit and to be engaged in nothing but looking at us; or rather I should say at D., for she drew ten times as good "gates" as I did. It must be remembered that with the notable exception of Mrs. Littledale in the nineties no European lady had ever been within a hundred miles of Keriya before. The inhabitants in crowds followed our every step, in the town and out of it; so that we, who objected to being butchered to make a Keriya holiday, stayed at home.

CHAPTER IX

DESERT, RIVER AND MOUNTAIN

ABOUT the tenth of February the grip of frost upon 132
the land began to relax noticeably, the surface of the ice on the skating-ponds became day by day more slushy and the sun's rays developed a hitting power which surprised us so early in the season. A fortnight later, amid general jubilation, the first muddy water appeared in the irrigation-channels, forerunner of the life-giving floods which in another two months would be sweeping down from the great ranges. Kashgar awoke and stretched itself after its winter sleep. All at once, it seemed, the poplars and willows put out their buds, the soil became soft and moist and the garden resounded with the chatter of starlings, the twitter of martens, the cooing of ring-doves and the hoo-hoo-hoo of the courting hoopoe. Spring was upon us, and at the Consulate our fancy lightly turned to thoughts of the Road. We planned a most attractive ten weeks' tour which would take us first to Merket, on the Yarkand River four marches to the east, thence down-river to Maralbashi and to fair Aqsu, 300 miles along the ancient Silk Road from Europe to Cathay, and back by Uch Turfan and the Mountains of Heaven. In the event, this programme had to be postponed to the autumn, except as regards Merket, but the spring tour that we did manage to carry out, though short, was interesting enough.

Sending our baggage-ponies and all our retinue except the 487
indispensable Hafiz and Sangi Khan ahead the day before, we left Kashgar on 21st March and reached Yupogha, 51 miles east-south-east, the same evening. Our way at first led through a flat country of trees and reedy canals and old farms on the banks of quiet rivers; but the second day the cultivation became gradually more sparse and the country drier as we approached the Takla Makan. That night we slept 346
at a thriving little market-village called Tarim Bazar, where

346 there is the much-frequented shrine of one of Kashgar's many lady-saints, Bu Mariam. It is a simple affair; a grove of ancient desert-poplars, two or three single-storied buildings on a little hill, a tall conical mound of faggots and sand surmounted by a bundle of long poles, and all round in serried ranks the tombs of the Faithful. Escaping with difficulty from the idly curious of Tarim Bazar we made tea for ourselves under a scented tamarisk-bush near the shrine. In a corner under the ancient poplars some families of pilgrims from Khotan were encamped with their ponies, donkeys and goats [291] around them like a nomad tribe on the move; an incredibly old beggar in his elaborately-ragged, almost theatrical patchwork costume and mediæval sheepskin-rimmed extinguisher hat doddered about among the graves; and all the while, incongruously, every tree and every bush was loud with the chorus of Spring.

487 Next day we crossed the westernmost and narrowest section of the Takla Makan, 24 miles broad, to the tiny settlement of Langar among the first jungles of the Yarkand River. It was not a pleasant march. Though there were no high dunes to cross, the going was heavy throughout, the sun's heat trying and the endless vistas of tamarisk-cones inexpressibly monotonous. The tarantass had as usual been sent back after our first double march, and we both rode. But the worst was now over. Next morning an exhilarating two-mile canter brought us to the river, across the placid waters of which roomy flat-bottomed ferry-boats were plying to and fro with cargoes of fur-hatted carters, blue-hooded Chinese carts, gaily-decked horses tinkling with bells and villagers in costumes of many colours. Across the river, in a grove of trees from which last year's leaves had not yet fallen (so calm and windless is the winter here), we were met by an unexpectedly imposing cortège. Twenty horsemen escorted a 631 landau drawn by three fine bays, harnessed troika-fashion and skilfully handled by an obviously Russian-trained Turki coachman. In the carriage sat a good-looking, clean-shaven young Chinese gentleman dressed in the regulation black silk coat and white skirt, and wearing the neat black cap of his country instead of the ridiculous bowler favoured by most of his colleagues. It was the Amban of Maralbashi, of which district Merket is a subdivision, and he was actually on tour—the first and last occasion during the whole of our time in Kashgaria on which we met a District Magistrate away from

000 case arose in connexion with the murder of a British subject by his son at a village in the Yarkand district, and it became
487 necessary for me to confer with the Amban of Yarkand at his headquarters. The march of 45 miles to Yarkand occupied a day and a half and led us through country which alternated
[36] between desert-poplar forest, marshes and cultivation. The display of bird life among the marshes along the right bank of the Yarkand River was astonishing. We saw none of the rainbow-plumaged "Shaw's pheasant" supposed to haunt these jungles, but among the reedy lakes and water-channels all along the road there was every now and again a mighty cackling and splashing of duck, geese, teal, cormorants, cranes, terns, plovers, coots, water-hens and many kinds of lesser fowl. A Paradise indeed for the naturalist and even for our ignorant selves, could we but have spared a few days to
[311] explore these little-known wilds with gun and camera. The Yarkand oasis was entered at Abad, a village of several hundred families living on land brought into cultivation twenty years before by an Amban called Liu, who used prison labour to dig a canal from the Yarkand River. This was one of several instances I came across in the Yarkand neighbourhood of cultivation being extended by enterprising and ambitious Magistrates. The area of this great oasis must be now at least twice what it was fifty years ago under the indigenous rule of Yakub Beg.

000 The five days my work occupied at Yarkand passed pleasantly enough at the garden of the Bar Gah, now a mass of snowy blossom, and while I sat in conclave with Amban or Aqsaqal, D. amused herself with shopping in the kaleidoscopic bazaars and exchanging visits with Swedish, Chinese, Indian and Turki friends. Once she was entertained at tea in the grand manner by the entire community of Hindu traders at their big caravanserai in the middle of the Old City, during the course of which a bowing young *bunnia* informed her that he knew the *Generail-Consul-Sahib* (i.e. me) quite well, as he had been a waiter at the United Services Club at Simla in 1920 when I had quarters there! Since then he had given up the job in order to join his brother who represented an Amritsar firm at Yarkand. Her visit to the Yamen to see the wife of the Amban was a somewhat difficult one. She found a child of eighteen, a forlorn, rather pathetic little figure dressed up like a doll, who almost died of nervousness and said through her Turki maid, "Please forgive me, I don't

them a few years ago. It was a pity that bad visibility and shortage of time prevented plane-tabling in this region, so that I was unable to supplement Sir Aurel Stein's map by fitting into it a traverse of our route, which except for 14 miles in the Chighmen and Suget Jilghas was one which had not previously been followed by Sir Aurel or any other explorer.

Leaving Yarkand on 2nd April we spent the night at Qaraul 487 Jash, 15 miles to the south-west of the city, as the guests of the British Aqsaqal, who had estates in that neighbourhood. Next day we plunged into the barren foothills of the Qizil Tagh. A long and hot march brought us to the only water in the region, brackish but just drinkable, a spring called Achiq Yusuf Qadir Khan. Here we camped thirstily, leaving at an early hour next morning in order to reach sweet water as soon as possible. It was not till three in the afternoon, however, that we crossed the last range of hills and found ourselves quite suddenly in the Chighmen Jilgha, a long valley which comes down from the inmost fastnesses of the Red Mountains and eventually debouches near Qizil Bazar on the Yarkand-Kashgar road. What a treat it was to come suddenly on a crystal, ice-cold stream and a little mill among willows just showing their spring green! It was too early to halt and [342 we filed up the valley, passing croft after croft of the Kirghiz' 341] rough stone-built huts with steeply-terraced cornfields now just beginning to be ploughed with the help of water carried along the hill-side in narrow channels. For these were "farmer Kirghiz" as we called them, not the pastoral, *aq-oi*-inhabiting Kirghiz of the higher mountains. Here are no great flocks and herds as on the high pastures of the Pamirs or the Tien Shan; only a few sheep and goats nibbling the scanty weeds along the rocky banks of the stream, guarded by tawny, thick-furred dogs. We stopped at a croft slightly larger than the rest to talk to the local Qazi, a typical thin-bearded, high-cheek-boned old Kirghiz, who earnestly begged us to pitch our tents on one or other of his pocket-handkerchief fields and be his guests. We spared the old man and pushed on another mile and a half, camping on a sheltered patch of grass in a bend of the stream-bed, 7,000 feet up.

Next day we contented ourselves with a half-march of nine miles only and camped at the tiny Kirghiz settlement of Suget Ayaghi, near the outlet of the Suget Valley, an upper branch of the Chighmen. The first inhabitants we saw in this valley were four tiny tots of children whom we surprised

● 487 toddling down to the ice-covered stream with blackened copper water-jugs to fill, a pretty sight. Later, when our camp was pitched, came three cheerful vast-turbaned, apple-cheeked ladies, with their sewing and their babies, and made themselves comfortable on the grass in front of D.'s tent, chatting with us and among themselves until D. should be ready to receive them inside. Then they crowded into her tent and hung excitedly over her unpacking. Though accustomed to friendliness and naturalness on the part of the Kirghiz, D. was at first a little puzzled at the remarkable lack of shyness of these women, on our very first appearance among them; but the mystery was soon solved. As she was setting out her toilet-table one of them suddenly pounced on a box of *trèfle incarnat* with cries of "Ufpah! Ufpah!" which means "powder-puff." D. was astonished, until they explained. One of them, it appeared, was the daughter of old Ibrahim Beg of Yambulak, and had recently been on a visit to her parents, who had told her all about our stay in their valley last July on our way to Kashgar. Consequently, the Suget ladies knew all that D. had then said and done, how she had given those of Yambulak cold cream for their hands and had initiated them in the mysteries of powder and puff, how she had promised them gloves and had painted a picture of the Beg's pretty daughter-in-law, and many other items of breathless interest. So D. knew what was expected of her, and ere long the camp resounded with their delighted gigglings as they powdered their noses and preened themselves in front of D.'s camp mirror.

Soon after leaving Suget Ayaghi we passed through a remarkable cleft in the high rocky wall and found ourselves in a wide sunny valley with snow-clad peaks at its head. Here, at a height of about 9,000 feet, were the summer pastures of the Suget Kirghiz and two of their cottages. There were no trees, but high up on the flanks of the central peaks we could see patches of fir-forest. This, we were told, was the valley to which the missionaries from Yarkand had come more than once for their summer camp. Leaving the Suget Jilgha by a pass just over 10,000 feet high we descended into a pleasant little valley called the Tam Jilgha, so called from the number of stone houses (*tām*) it contained. Poplars grew in it, remarkable at a height of over 9,000 feet, and there was quite a respectable area of cultivation, chiefly barley. Here we saw three different kinds of animal being used in the plough

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within a few hundred yards; in one field a pair of horses and another of bullocks, on another plot a fine pair of yaks was harnessed to the plough. Crossing another quite easy pass we dropped down into the Sarai Jilgha, a much less fertile valley, with only two very poor families of Kirghiz in it.

On 8th April we crossed our third and highest pass in the Qizil Tagh, the Sarai Davan, 11,500 feet. It was steep and had a regular knife-edge top, but was not difficult and our carrier's ponies which were accustomed to the Karakoram road made light of it. Descending from the pass by a steep and narrow nullah we debouched on the Kinkol Valley at Kichik Qaraul, where we were on the Tashqurghan-Kashgar road up which we had come the previous July. We had thus left the "Red Mountains" behind us.

An attractive feature of the Qizil Tagh is the partridge shooting. We were there at the wrong time of year for it, but we shot a few birds for the pot now and then, and from the number of coveys we saw it was evident that in autumn a party of two or three guns would get a very good bag indeed in any one of the three valleys we visited. The only country in which I have seen as many red-legged partridge (*chikor*) as in the Qizil Tagh is the valleys of the Sulaiman Mountains in the north of British Baluchistan. The pursuit of the chikor or *keklik* (so called in Turki from the noise they make, kik-alik-alik-alik) is one of the most strenuous forms of sport I know. The birds are usually found near a steep, often precipitous, hillside; at the slightest alarm they run for it and climb, and you have to pound up after them as hard as you can. Without beaters, the difficulty usually is to put them up. Shooting for the pot, as I always did on these tours, I usually took a long shot at a runner, in which case the covey would often get up and in their agitation break back over my head, in which case I got a shot with my left barrel. This performance I could hardly describe as a "right and left," so I called it a "ground and air."

Marching up the Kinkol valley we struck westwards up the Chumbuz Jilgha, a promising glen, of which I had made a note for future exploration the previous July. It led up into another small blank patch in Sir. A. Stein's map, and my object was to survey it roughly and cross by a pass called the Kizmak which I knew led over from its head into the upper Qaratash Valley. Lest the Kizmak should prove really bad—it had never been crossed by European—I decided to send most

487 of the servants and baggage round by the Ghijak Pass to the north, while D. and I with two orderlies, a couple of Kirghiz guides and little else but our toothbrushes, crossed the Kizmak. Each party spending a night on the way, we were to meet the baggage at Chat in the Qaratash Valley, six miles above the great gorges down which we hoped to pass.

Before carrying out this plan we halted a day at a croft called Chong Terek or the Big Poplar, a couple of miles up the Chumbuz Jilgha. The day was spent by me in surveying the lower part of the Chumbuz valley and by D. in doctoring the Kirghiz, baking scones and hunting chikor and pigeons. We were still, at 8,000 feet, among agricultural Kirghiz, and we did not like them nearly as much as the pastoral inhabitants 162 of the higher levels. The people of the lower Chumbuz Jilgha seemed to us a mongrel mixture of Turki and Kirghiz, com- 181 bining the laziness of the former with the untruthfulness of the latter and lacking the good qualities of either. The women, too, D. said, were more like the sophisticated product of the plains than the handsome, fearless, busy ladies of the lofty grazing-grounds. We found ourselves among the latter kind once more at the Kizmak pastures near the head of the Chumbuz Jilgha, which we ascended on 9th April while our caravan [361] went round by the Ghijaq Pass. The tents of the Kizmak Kirghiz were pitched at an elevation of 11,100 feet, on a steeply- [291] sloping strip of land under high red sandstone cliffs beside the partially-frozen stream, and the place swarmed with a picturesque medley of men in huge fur-rimmed caps, women in their quaint turbans, children, yaks, ponies, sheep, goats, 000 dogs and cats. A large *aq-oi* full of warm-tinted rugs and other Kirghiz "furniture" was hastily vacated for us, the tiny bath-tent we always carried on these occasions was put up outside, and we were soon comfortably settled. It was still early in the afternoon, and the ladies soon had D. out; armed with her medicine-bottles she visited each of the other tents in turn, bathing sore eyes, anointing neglected cuts and badly chapped hands and prescribing for the universal indigestion caused by the rock-like bread and masses of sour cream the Kirghiz indulge in. Her description in a letter of the scene in the last *aq-oi* she visited is delightful. "I sat on the floor," she says, "tying up a woman's badly-cut knee, while three others stood round holding out their dresses as a screen from the male inmates of the tent; in the middle, over the

000 fire, a man was cooking an entire sheep ; in another direction five men were saying their evening prayers ; twelve young lambs were tied up in a row in another part of the *aq-oi* and all the rest of the room was taken up by the fat Beg who sat warming his feet at the fire and sipping a bowl of tea ! "

● 487 The Kizmak Pass next day proved terribly steep and some 14,000 feet high, but the magnificent yaks provided by the Kirghiz carried our loads up it (though with many halts and tremendous puffings and gruntings). They then tobogganed neatly down the still steeper descent on the west side, which contained snow and showed signs of recent avalanches. The glorious view from the top, including the whole mountain-system of the upper and middle Qaratash, kept us there nearly two hours ; though unfortunately it was too late in the day for either Qungur or Muz Tagh Ata to be free from clouds, and my telephotographs were not successful. A long day ended with a six-mile canter against a howling north wind down the broad flat bottom of the Qaratash Valley to Chat, where we were relieved to find our caravan waiting for us and our tents pitched. Six inches of snow fell that night, but next morning it cleared up and I decided to halt a day, which I spent in plane-tabling and telephotographing the magnificent snows of Qungur and the Shiwakte from the heights above Chat.

Next day (12th April) we started the march down the Qaratash Gorges, to which I had been looking forward with some apprehension. The worst part does not begin till below the junction of the Qaratash and Chimghan valleys, six miles below Chat, but even in this six miles the valley narrows 585 considerably and the river has to be forded seven times. Four miles below Chat, at a place called Bek Targhak, we had the unexpected pleasure of assisting at a Kirghiz wedding feast. Forty or fifty Kirghiz, including several women, were gathered at a mud-walled enclosure in which four *aq-ois* were pitched ; they invited us through the Beg to come in, and next moment we found ourselves sitting in a crowded *aq-oi* chewing portions of a sheep which was being stewed at the fire in the middle. Asking which were the happy pair, we were informed that neither of them was present, it being the custom throughout the *nikah* or wedding feast for the bride and bridegroom to stay in their respective tents in the background. D. was taken in to see the lady and reported afterwards that she was a woman

585 [587] of about twenty-five who was marrying for the second time; her late husband had been the first cousin of the present bridegroom, who was marrying her as next-of-kin according to a common practice among the Kirghiz.[1]

We had no little difficulty in tearing ourselves away from the hospitable Kirghiz, who evidently considered we had brought luck to the happy pair. The revelry was still in its early stages, and every moment more and more guests arrived, some riding two on a pony or camel, others striding through the sleet on foot. We did our best in the way of wedding presents, but all the coloured scarves, woollen gloves, bead necklaces, hunting-knives and other treasures we had brought had already been distributed among the Kirghiz of the Qizil Tagh and other places along the road. However, we left the bridegroom very happy with a small cash present and the bride radiant with a magnificent pair of diamond and pink pearl ear-rings which D. had bought for the equivalent of about a shilling at a Hindu shop in Yarkand.

● 487 Eventually, after I had photographed the family party in the *aq-oi*, as well as the entire assembly outside, we escaped and made our way after the caravan as fast as the rough track would let us. Two miles lower down we came to the junction of the Chimghan and Qaratash rivers and looked longingly up the fine wide valley of the former stream. Its flat bottom was fully a mile broad with meadows, cultivation and willow woods; as the sky cleared and the mists rose we caught glimpses of magnificent snowy ranges rising ten thousand feet above it on either side. No European but our one predecessor, Stein, had so much as looked up it, and even he had not explored it. I would have given much to spend two or three days camping up the Chimghan Jilgha, which I knew would lead me into the inmost fastnesses of Qungur and the mysterious Shiwakte; but I dared not. In mid-April the summer floods might come down any day, and it was inadvisable to run the risk of being trapped by them in the middle of the dreaded Qaratash gorges. As it was, the combined waters of the Chimghan and Qaratash streams, which we had to cross thirty-one times before we at last emerged upon the plains at Altunluk, were only just fordable by our baggage-ponies; our bedding and boxes of clothes we loaded on two or three camels which the Kirghiz produced, steady sure-footed animals, which scarcely allowed their loads to be so much as splashed.

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[1] For an account of the marriage customs of the Kirghiz in the Alps of Qungur, see Chapter XI.

It was half-past twelve when we crossed the last of the four channels of the Chimghan stream at its junction with the Qaratash and dived into the great gorges. The rest of that day's march was a strange experience. The mountain-sides towered up 10,000 feet on either side, with the snouts of occasional hanging glaciers visible far above us. The river dashed backwards and forwards between its rocky walls, high up the face of which we could here and there make out the track, a few inches wide and carried from ledge to ledge on the slender trunks of young fir trees, which in summer forms the only communication between the inhabitants of some of the glens and the outer world. The worst part was a horrible gorge called Arasunde, which we reached late in the afternoon. Here the torrent was quite unfordable, and it took our loads nearly two hours to cover one mile, so often did the ponies have to be unloaded and the packs man-handled between huge boulders or along dangerous sections of the track, which clung giddily to the cliff-face above the racing flood. After this I had to give up hope of reaching our camping-place of the previous October at Bash Kupruk below the mouth of the Kaying Jilgha; darkness overtook us more than a mile above that place, and we were obliged to halt for the night on a narrow strip of land boasting a few small trees and bushes for fire-wood but very little grazing for the animals. Though it was half-past seven before the loads were off and the temperature of the wind blowing up-river 42°, we were sitting down to a three-course dinner in D.'s tent at half-past eight, with beds made and everything ship-shape for the night, and all the men (except Ahmad Bakhsh and Murad who served us and supped later) laughing and talking over their evening meal round the camp fire.

After that day's march even the Tügene-tar gorge below Bash Kupruk was plain sailing, and we camped at Saman in comparative comfort next afternoon. Here we were met by a consignment of grain for the horses and food for the men, which I had arranged to have brought up from Yangi Hissar, also by D.'s camel Sulaiman, which had been sent there by the plains route from Yarkand. He was a useful addition to our caravan, as my horse and D.'s had exactly five shoes between them by the time they reached Saman. D. rode Sulaiman and our spare riding-pony alternately the last 57 miles between

487 Saman and Kashgar, which we did between 9 a.m. on 14th April and 2.30 p.m. on the 15th. Not bad going considering that all but the last five of the 34 miles between Saman and Akhtur Bazar were over rough, stony tracks and included three more crossings of the Qaratash River.

000 lasted till four. Meanwhile, lest worse should befall (for there was talk of another feast the same evening *chez* the Commandant of the Garrison) I had sent word to D. to push the caravan off and be ready to start as soon as I could escape from the Yamen. Within half an hour of the disappearance of the longed-for bowl of rice which terminates all Chinese feasts I had joined her on the road and we were riding westward on a golden evening. Our first march was necessarily a short one, and our destination appropriately Altunluk, the "Golden Village" at the mouth of the Qaratash Valley. As we mounted the long, gentle slope on which the village and its orchards stand, the sun set right over the south-western Tien Shan beyond which lies Ferghana ; it was so clear that we could see the whole plain of Kashgar, sixty miles broad, and the green villages which stretched up to the foot-hills of the great ranges on three sides of it. But, alas, ominous banks of cloud enveloped the Alps of Qungur which had been so clear in the morning ; once more, by a curious fatality, the mountains for which we were bound hid themselves from our sight as we
● 487 approached. That night I held conclave with the greybeards of Altunluk and old Sabit Beg, who again came with us by order of the Amban, as to the route to be followed on the morrow. All were agreed that loaded ponies could not possibly reach Khan Terek owing to the volume of water in the river. I was prepared for this, and after long argument I elicited from them an admission that the river *could* be crossed not far above Altunluk, if you took it at the right time of day, and that for the rest the only really bad place was the "Narrows" below Saman, where it would not be possible to ford the Qaratash and we would have to hug the left bank, which is precipitous and difficult. This was better than toiling round by the almost waterless Nine Passes route and losing two precious days at Kaying, so I decided to try the direct route up the Qaratash.

Next day (22nd June) at noon, when the daily fall in the level of the water had taken place,[1] we forded the river success-fully four miles above Altunluk, where its stone-grey waters raced over a pebbly bed several hundred yards wide in seven channels. Three of these were so swift and deep that it was only with the help of ten sturdy lads of the village, who kept their feet in the flood with a skill born of long practice, that our animals managed to flounder across without mishap. One of the ponies, indeed, was carried some way down-stream with his load, but a party of villagers joined hands and succeeded in pulling him into shallower water. Besides Tutankhamen, we had seven donkeys laden with forage, and these had practically to be carried across bodily, loads and all, by two villagers apiece.

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[1] It may be explained that among these mountains, as elsewhere in High Asia, the volume of water in the rivers increases and decreases daily at definite hours which depend at any particular point on the time taken by the water of the snows melted by the noonday sun to reach it. When arriving at a river, the first question the experienced traveller asks of the local people, if any, is "At what hour does the water reach this place ?" or, if the daily flood is in progress, "When does it go down ?" At Altunluk the Qaratash is at its highest between midnight and 10 a.m.

For the next three hours we made good progress and fondly imagined we would make Saman easily by nightfall. When, however, at three o'clock in the afternoon we reached the lower end of the Narrows, we met a funny, wizened little old Kirghiz who told us that the path had been carried away by the recent heavy rains and that it was not possible to get through even on foot, much less with loaded ponies. He was on his way home, he told us, from Yangi Hissar to the grazing-grounds of the upper Yapchan Jilgha, and had been held up by the wash-out in the Narrows. Fortunate it was for us that we happened upon the old Kirghiz at this juncture, for he knew of a pass away up among the barren ridges to the west, by which the Narrows could be circumvented, and offered to guide us over it. We afterwards came to know and like old Samsaq Bai, for that was his name, very well; but at first we suspected him of being slightly mad, for not only was his Turki almost unintelligible to us but he punctuated his remarks with strange bursts of elfin laughter. I thought it best, therefore, not to commit the caravan to his care at once, but to camp where we were on the banks of the Qaratash and spend the rest of the afternoon reconnoitring. The alternative, a depressing one, was to return to Altunluk and go round by the "Nine Passes."

Accordingly while D. and Sangi Khan went off on foot to reconnoitre the path through the Narrows on their own account, I mounted Samsaq Bai on one of our ponies and off we went up into the forbidding-looking jumble of hills to the west. For six weary miles we toiled up waterless and absolutely barren defiles. Then, turning a corner, my companion pointed up to a sharp backbone of rock on the sky-line, cleft at one point only by a narrow and forbidding couloir which led up to a

487 small gap in the ridge. This "pass," which he called the Aqsai Davan, looked impossible at first, but when I climbed up to the foot of the couloir I found that there was a well-marked track straight up it between perpendicular walls with a gradient of about one in two. I came to the conclusion that by unloading the animals and man-handling them and the loads up to the top we could get the caravan over, while as for the descent on the other side, Samsaq assured me that it was not nearly so steep.

D. reported that night that the track up to the Narrows was good for a couple of miles, but then dwindled away until it became a red-clay slide going straight down to the river a hundred feet below. Apparently the recent heavy rains had washed away what track there had been. We made an early start next morning and reached the foot of the final *col* at half-past ten. The first animal to achieve the ascent was D.'s horse, which scrambled up with Sangi Khan at his head and D. hanging on to his tail. Next came the camel, Sulaiman, hauled in front by Yakub and propelled behind by Samsaq and an Altunluk man, one of the funniest sights I have ever seen. Though we expected every moment that his lanky, loose-jointed legs would collapse, he behaved admirably and reached the top intact. The riding-horses, donkeys and baggage-ponies followed one by one, mostly without their loads. Unlike donkeys and camels, horses can never quite be relied upon on such occasions, and two of the baggage ponies at different points in the ascent suddenly lost heart and backed down the hill, in spite of all that four men reinforced by myself could do to stop them. In each case the animal quickly lost its footing, became wildly excited and rolled itself and the men off the path into the bottom of the couloir, fortunately only a few feet below the track. There, boulders prevented the struggling mass of pony and men from sliding further down the hill. Neither of the ponies received more than a few bruises and scratches, and they eventually reached the top safely. The descent proved, as Samsaq had said, less breakneck than the ascent, but it was steep enough, and we were all immensely relieved when the loads and animals were safely over the pass and filing down long winding gorges which led back to the main valley above the Narrows. The whole détour occupied seven hours, including more than two hours spent in getting over the *col* itself, i.e. five hours longer than it would have taken us to go by the direct route had the track been practicable.

487 We did not halt at Saman, as there was one obstacle still to be negotiated before our entrance to the Promised Land was assured. This was a corner of rock which juts out into the stream at the rapids below Khan Terek. At this point the track passes round the rock and is under water even in winter, and I knew that the only chance of getting round it at this season would be at low water in the evening. We came to the place at half-past four, when I found to my relief that there were only about three feet of water off the end of the rock and that the current was not strong, though few feet farther out the cataract roared past like a gigantic mill-race. The loads splashed through without mishap, and half an hour later in the little orchard of Qurghan we were being warmly welcomed by a dozen beaming Kirghiz men and girls.

574 The only permanent inhabitant of Khan Terek was a little old woman who lived alone in a tiny shanty. Each of the previous occasions on which we had passed her hut she had bustled out with a large copper jug and a wooden bowl to give us tea. She saw us coming this time and hobbled over to our camp where, for once, she had tea with us. Afterwards D. returned her call; she found the old lady living in a room about five feet square off a yard about twice that area, in which she kept one aged cock. Her husband had long been dead, she told D., and her children scattered, but one son occasionally came and cultivated a couple of fields near by, while she stayed in the hut all the year round and made tea for passing Kirghiz.

The humble hospitality of even the poorest of the Kirghiz in these parts warmed our hearts to them. Next day three miles up the Chopkana valley we were overtaken by heavy rain and took refuge in an *aq-oi*. A pretty girl and her one-eyed old father insisted on making up a blazing fire for us and a bowl of tea, chatting politely to us the while. On an exposed meadow at the very top of the pass, 11,500 feet above the sea, we found a solitary *aq-oi* with a girl in it whose husband was away on the hill-side tending the flocks. She had weather-beaten red cheeks and a flat nose, but she was charming and joined us in the tea-basket tea with which we warmed ourselves while waiting for the caravan to struggle up the last
262 steep ascent. Meanwhile, in a large pot on the central fire of fir-logs, she brewed *mach*, a kind of soup of milk, barley-meal and water with a little meat in it, and when our men arrived at the top she ran out and administered it to them
IN WOODEN BOWLS.

CHAPTER XIV

AMONG THE MOUNTAINS OF HEAVEN

487 IN the autumn of 1923 we carried out a tour to which we had long looked forward, north-eastward along the southern slopes of the Tien Shan to Uch Turfan, Aqsu and beyond, returning by the ordinary plains route *viâ* the Tarim River valley and the Maralbashi jungles.

Our way at first led for 220 miles through the outer ranges of the Tien Shan to the frontier town of Uch Turfan. We were not so fortunate as usual in our transport, for all that the Aqsaqal of Kashgar could raise for us was a mixed lot of inferior ponies and donkeys in charge of a lazy and inefficient boy of fourteen, the son of the real carrier who ought to have come with us. Leaving Kashgar on September 2, D. and I accompanied by Murad Qari rode 54 miles across the rich lands of Besh Karim and a strip of desert to the Kalta Yailaq oasis, near the north edge of which we found our tents pitched. It was a hot day, and the march was the longest we ever did. According to our usual time-saving custom we had sent the caravan ahead the day before; the orderly in charge had gone seven miles beyond the appointed camping-place, so that it was nearly eleven o'clock at night before we got in.

Two days later we crossed a low pass among the barren foot-hills north of Sughun Qaraul; the summit is marked by a grim shrine called Allahyar Beg, consisting of little but a post decorated with the skull and backbone of a donkey and the cap of a man who had once died there. We saw few travellers on the road, and those mostly traders in grain and local cotton cloth between Uch Turfan and Kashgar. One evening I talked with a young man of Artush whom we overtook. He had four donkeys with him, on which he told me he was taking flour up into the mountains to trade with the Kirghiz for sheep. He did this two or three times in the year, he said, 487 and went all over the mountains. He seemed a good type of youth, sturdy, cheerful and independent.

133 The Yai Dōbe plain, on which we now debouched, is a small but perfect example of the inland drainage basins characteristic of Central Asia. Situated at an average elevation of 5,000 feet, it is some 60 miles long by 15-20 broad and is enclosed on the north by one of the parallel ranges of the Tien Shan with peaks up to 13,000 feet, on the south and east by foothills rising to 8,000 feet. It has no outlet, but boasts its own miniature Lop Nor in the shape of a salt lake near its south-eastern corner. Like the *hāmūns* of Persian Baluchistan and Sistan, this lake varies in size according to the rainfall in the mountains, from practically nothing to a sheet of water 40 or 50 square miles in area. The rest of the Yai Dōbe plian is partly barren, partly covered with tamarisks and a sparse forest of desert poplar. Some of these trees attain a great age and size; they are not in the least like poplars, resembling rather the British oak. Here and there in the forest are springs of fresh or slightly brackish water, each with farmsteads or Kirghiz tents in the vicinity. In the spring and autumn the woodland is delightful, but in summer the mosquitos and gadflies for which both it and the Maralbashi jungles to the south are notorious make it uninhabitable by man or beast.

487 For fifty miles we marched across this curious plain. On September 5 we passed out of the desert-poplar forest and camped the same evening at the springs of Yairam Bulak. Here two families of Kirghiz had pitched their *aq-ois* near a couple of tiny crofts shaded by willows, landmarks [574] for miles in the great sweep of bare plain. We liked the Kirghiz of these hills and got on well with them, but we could not help noticing that they were less hospitable than their cousins of our beloved "Alps of Qungur." They never asked us into their *aq-ois*, nor did they seem to regard us guests as the others (often quite embarassingly) did. It struck me that there might be two reasons for this. In the first place, living on the Russian border, they are at once less secure and more sophisticated. In the second, a trade route much used by Turki merchants passes through their territory; these men, I was told, were in the habit of taking supplies whenever they 609 could and not paying for them. But the Tien Shan Kirghiz 487 could be friendly enough when once their confidence had been gained. The ladies of Yairam Bulak crowded round D., whose

487 609 like they had never seen before. They were particularly impressed by the gold in my teeth; they asked D. about it, evidently thinking it was a kind of ornament. They also asked her what my other wife was like, and whether she never travelled. D. explained that in the West men had only one wife at a time, whereupon they exclaimed "Aren't you lonely?"

361 In this country nomadic and settled Kirghiz are mixed, not separated by an uninhabited belt and a distinct difference in level, as in the mountains to the south of the Kashgarian plain. Our next camp was at a scattered village of crofts called Pichan; behind it, a line of the curious domed tombs of Kirghiz-land cresting a bluff showed that the settlement was an old one. We made great friends with the enormously fat and jovial Beg of the place, a regular Falstaff. He told us that the little community had been almost ruined three years before, when the disturbances in Semirechia following the introduction of the Soviet régime had resulted in the migration of thousands of families, Sarts and Kirghiz, to Chinese territory. "They brought huge flocks of sheep and goats with them," he said, "which ate up all the grass, so that there was none for the Pichan flocks and they died. Our stock was thus destroyed, and now we can't work it up again because we have no surplus [651] for breeding. But the *Khitai* (Chinese) have not reduced our cattle tax, fixed many years ago at 15 dachins (1½*d.*) per head—they still take fifty taels a year off us, though there are no sheep. But we make no complaint, because though there is a good deal of cultivation we pay no land tax. If we attracted the Amban's attention he might find out about the cultivation, and then we would have to pay both land and cattle tax."

The fat Beg found a congenial spirit in the cheerful Hafiz, with whom he "swapped lies" uproariously far into the night. Next morning as we marched out of Pichan I happened to look round, and there were Hafiz and the Beg riding along arm-in-arm, with broad grins on their faces, each wearing the other's hat. It was one of the funniest sights I have ever seen, Hafiz in the huge black lambskin Kirghiz cap and the Beg with Hafiz' *dopa* perched like a Glengarry on the top of his vast head and face.

[312] 487 There was plenty of good water at Pichan, but at our next halting-place twenty miles farther up among the bare hills at Qizil Eshma, we very nearly had to go without. A family of Kirghiz were encamped at the mouth of a small side-glen apparently just as dry as the main valley. The servants I

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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sent up it to look for water came back saying that there was none for "two potais" (5 miles), only a spring high up among the mountains which they could not reach. I was not inclined to reload and toil many miles farther up the valley to the next halting-place, so I thought I would have a look myself. Half a mile up the side-glen the soil was damp, and a little farther I came upon a string of tiny pools. The flow was almost imperceptible, and a few yards further on the soil was again dry. But it was enough; we filled our buckets with sweet water, at the rate of about one per hour, and the animals were all watered by midnight. Evidently the Kirghiz (who were particularly shy at this place) had misled our servants and concealed the existence of the spring for fear lest we should drink up all the water and perhaps foul the supply.

Our next camp was a pleasant one, at Qaragor Kul ten thousand feet up among the very tops of the gently-rounded grey-green hills. Here there are no springs at all; a certain amount of rain falls, judging by the grass which covers the land, but there must be something in the geological structure which prevents the formation of springs. On the other hand there are several shallow basins in which the rain-water collects; the Kirghiz camp with their herds of ponies and flocks of sheep and goats beside one of these rain-ponds until they have drunk it dry, when they pass on to another. Qaragor and its neighbourhood lie within the jurisdiction of the Amban of Kelpin two marches to the south, an interesting place well off the beaten track which I would have liked to visit had there been time.

Next day we crossed two passes and descended a long glen, past patches of our first Tien Shan firs, to the wide valley of the Taushkan ("Hare") River. This stream, the main confluent of the Qum Ariq, which it joins close to Aqsu, breaks through from Semirechian territory, where it is known as the Kokshal. Its broad reaches and the snow-clad Tien Shan on its northern bank made a series of fine vistas for our delectation on the two marches to Uch Turfan. The soil of the valley is rich, and we passed through a series of picturesque villages, Somtash and Safarbai, Kok Oinak and Tusma, growing several kinds of root-crops, grain and lucerne, in the intervals between rocky ridges across which our undersized pack animals scrambled wearily.

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Uch Turfan which we reached on 11th September is a small town charmingly situated among groves of planes and tall

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 cypress-like poplars. A chain of curiously abrupt, craggy
hills juts out from the black fantastically-fretted mountains of
the Kelpin district, half-way across the broad valley. On an
isolated spur of these, close to the town, is an old Chinese
castle, still kept up and occupied by a small garrison ; for Uch
Turfan is a frontier post of some strategic importance, commanding the high and difficult but much-used Bedal Pass
241 leading across the Tien Shan from Semirechia. The country
round Uch Turfan is closely cultivated, the soil being, if possible,
361 even more fertile than that of the great oases of the south.
Here there are no villages, nothing but countless farms standing on their own "small holdings," with fields well laid out between rows of tall poplars and many timber-trees shading the farms. From the summit of one of the abrupt hills mentioned above the view on a clear autumn day is superb. At one's feet, gardens and vineyards, melon-fields and tobacco-plantations ; in the middle distance, the town with its massive walls embowered in greenery, watched over by the old castle on its crag ; all around, miles and miles of fields and trees and farmsteads in rich mosaic, almost perfectly flat, with rocky hills like islands rising out of the sea of green and autumn gold ; in the background, from west right round to north-east, the Mountains of Heaven in full array, furrowed deep with glens and rising in the north to Pelion piled on Ossa of eternal snow ; to the south and south-west, the fantastic dark-brown and black peaks and crags of the Kelpin mountains, tier beyond tier, each a little hazier and more mysterious than the last.

300 I dined one day with the Amban and other officials in the gardens of Toqquz Bulak ("Nine Springs"), a Chinese pleasaunce famous throughout Sinkiang. The springs from which the place takes its name gush from the foot of one of the rocky hills near the town ; there are well-tended gardens round them and a square pond lined with willows, into the midst of which juts a wooden pier. Anchored at the end of the pier, surprisingly, is a houseboat of the regular Thames or Kashmir type, containing a room fitted up as a dining-room with a kitchen and pantry off it ; above, to complete the illusion, awnings and chairs and flowers in pots. One dines either in the houseboat or, if it is warm, in a summer-house on a ledge of the cliff above the pond. The Magistrate who entertained me, a Chinese Mussulman whom we were to meet again at a dramatic moment before we left Kashgar,[1] was a great horti-

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[1] See pp. 264–5.

the like, their astonishment and gratitude were pathetic. As one of them exclaimed to D. on receipt of some buttons worth about an eighth of a penny " There's never been anyone like you this way before ! "

487 On 28th September we struck camp once more and marched 35 miles over alternate oasis and desert to the right bank of the Qum Ariq River. Here we found ourselves in some of the most fertile country I have ever seen ; it was the Beg of Taghak near by who, when I asked him whether I could get any maize, replied—" In this country, Sahib, you can get any thing you like except chicken's milk." Meanwhile the hateful dust-haze of the Tarim Basin had closed down once more and swallowed everything up. Though we crossed the Qum Ariq River close to the mouth of the tremendous unexplored gorge by which it cuts its way through the Central Tien Shan, we could not see it nor the Savaktai and other magnificent peaks to the north. Knowing however, that in October the haze would not last long, we possessed our souls in patience. Following a route roughly parallel to that taken by Stein in 1908 we pitched our tents at a wild spot called Ileklik on the Pakalik stream, about 25 miles north of Aqsu. Here and at Chigan Kotan, 5 miles to the north-east, I spent three or four days trying without success to get a shot at one of the wild sheep, smaller than *Ovis karelini* and apparently a separate variety, which inhabit the barren plateaux north of Aqsu. All this time the haze persisted. Then, on the very day we started on the last four marches to Bai, it cleared up and the magnificent snows of the Central Tien Shan revealed themselves in all their glory.

What interested me most, apart from immense unmapped peaks and the vision of at least one glacier comparable in size with those of the Karakoram, was the belt of fir-forest which stretched along the whole length of the range at a height of about 8,000 feet. I could see that there was a zone of Alpine country several miles deep between the arid foothills and grassy uplands we were traversing and the snow-line of the main range. I noticed that the fir-forest never grew on the south side of the ridges, each of which showed merely a line of trees along its crest where the forest clothing its north slope ended abruptly.

It was tantalizing to see this wonderful country and not be able to explore it. If we had known sooner what it was like, it might have been possible to do something. But it was

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late in the season and snow lay over all the alpine zone; moreover, the Begs of Pakalik and Tarlak, mountain villages to the north of us inhabited not by Kirghiz but by " Sarts," were not helpful. They evidently did not want us in their country and took as little trouble on our behalf as they could. I find a bitter entry in my diary on the subject, which I quote for the benefit of future travellers in this region.

" Here, the one object of the Begs is to save themselves the trouble of finding you supplies and guides, even though you pay liberally for everything. They will tell you any lie and subject you to any inconvenience or disappointment to save themselves a little trouble. In this country, never listen to what the Beg says about the best place to camp at—always choose your own place, and camp where convenient to *you*. If they want you to go on " just another potai," beyond a pleasant camping-ground, late in the evening, *don't*. If you are shooting and have found game, and they want you to move somewhere else where there is more game, *don't*. The only people you can at all rely on in this country are the Kirghiz, and even they are not as trustworthy as those of the Qaratash Valley."

The Beg of Pakalik finally distinguished himself by not only failing to find us a guide but himself deserting us some miles east of Chigan Kotan. There was not a sign of human life as far as the eye could reach in any direction, and we had to steer by the sun and such landmarks as I could identify in Stein's map. In the afternoon we struck the Terang stream for which I had been making, but there was not a habitation to be seen, nor any grass. We were just making up our minds to a desert camp without food for man or beast, when some one caught sight of a solitary man on a camel in the far distance, riding southwards. By great good luck he turned out to be a camelherd in the employ of an old Andijani merchant of Aqsu called Abdus Sattar Haji, of whom I had heard as a well-wisher of the Consulate. The boy said that the nearest habitation was his master's place at Yetim Dōbe up among the mountains to the north, and there he brought us safely after another seven hours' steady marching. We should certainly never have found the way without a guide; for about five miles the path wound and twisted in a labyrinth of steep-sided red clay hills and then crossed a stiff little pass called the Jigda Bulak Dawan. I had a careful watch kept on the lad the whole way, for he was as lazy as every one else in that country and did not

• 487 want to guide us, though I gave him money and promised him more. Once I thought he had given us the slip among the gorges of the red hills, but we found him again. It was half past eight and pitch dark before our ears were at last greeted by the welcome sound of dogs barking, and a few minutes later we were warming ourselves at a roaring coal fire in a cosy room at the Haji's farm. The old man himself was not there, but his sons welcomed us most kindly and feasted our men royally on mutton and maize bread.

Next morning the air was clearer than ever, and we realized how attractive was the country into which we had stumbled blindly, as it were, the night before. The ranch—for the place corresponded somewhat to my idea of a South American *estancia*—lay in the midst of an immense sweep of grassy upland, above which to the north rose snow-clad ridges fringed with firs. That day's march, from Yetim Dōbe to Qizil Bulak near the foot of the Muzart Pass, was one of the 137 most enjoyable I have ever performed. Our guide, one of the Haji's sons, led us over one little pass after another, in and out of charming green valleys, some inhabited, others not, some clothed only with wild rose and barberry, others dotted with clumps of trees resplendent in gorgeous autumn tints, orange, russet, gold and scarlet. We lunched contentedly off cold partridge sandwiches and cake under a clump of desert poplars in the middle of a hay-field perched up on a hill-side opposite the snows; a picturesque Sart woman gathered wisps of mown hay near by and loaded them on a quaint wheel-less bullock-cart. She was not in the least shy, and exchanged 136 remarks with us the while. On this and the following day we enjoyed such sport after small game as I had never known before. I was accustomed in the mountains to the south of Kashgar to getting as many red-legged partridge on the march as I liked, with a few sand-grouse, pigeons and perhaps a duck or two thrown in; but never had I found myself in such a small-game shooter's paradise as the southern valleys of the Central Tien Shan. Without straying a hundred yards from the road I shot (1) red-legged partridge, (2) *sisi*, a kind of very small and succulent partridge common in Baluchistan and Persia, but not seen by us elsewhere in Chinese Turkistan, (3) sand-grouse, (4) teal, (5) hares, (6) blue pigeons, besides which I missed an easy chance at a pair of those fine birds (7) imperial sandgrouse. I may mention here that on this tour altogether we came across no less than fourteen different

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

kinds of small game, and that without going off the road. 136
Besides the seven enumerated above, we saw, either in the mountains or in the jungles of the Tarim River valley, the following: (8) Shaw's pheasant, (9) duck, including mallard pintail, gadwall, golden-eye, and red-crested pochard, (10) snipe, (11) woodcock, (12) geese, (13) plover, (14) Tibetan snow-cock. Of these I shot specimens of all except woodcock and Tibetan snow-cock. The former we saw at Maralbashi flying through a garden; the latter I came across in large numbers at 11,000–12,000 feet while stalking ibex up the Yangi Art Jilgha.

Of many pictures that live in our memory of that delightful 487 ●
march, perhaps the most vivid is of the shrine of Qara-sakal Atam, "My Father Blackbeard." It is situated in the loveliest little glen imaginable. A limpid stream plashes down through open meadows from the fir-clad ridges of the Central Tien Shan, until it joins the main valley through a narrow neck between two backbones of reddish rock. Just above this neck is a coppice of fine old mountain ashes and desert poplars enclosing a glade of smooth turf and a bubbling spring. Barberry bushes, now a mass of carmine berries, and the brilliant orange-yellow of the trees in their autumn finery blend perfectly with the rich russets and ochres of the surrounding rocks; looking northwards, the grassy steppe sweeps right up to the distant forest above which again tower the snow- [778]
clad Mountains of Heaven. Father Blackbeard's shrine is only a bunch of sticks, festooned with votive rags and embellished with the horns of wild sheep; but whoever he was and whenever he lived, he is marked as having been a saint of taste—for did he not choose the most beautiful spot in all the Tien Shan to be his hermitage?

Two long but easy marches down the open and partially-cultivated valley of the Muzart River brought us to the small town of Bai on the Aqsu-Kucha road. Here we found the Mir Munshi awaiting us; he had come out from Kashgar to help me with my work at Bai and Aqsu. We stayed four days at the roomy Chinese rest-house at Bai, most of which I spent interviewing various British subjects from Kucha, three 162
marches further on. The town, which is the headquarters of a third-class Magistrate, is an undistinguished Sleepy Hollow of a place, populated by Turkis and Chinese Muhammadan Tungans in the proportion of about three to one. It was ooc
our first experience of the latter race *en masse*, and we were

000 not favourably impressed. For Asiatics—I do not judge them by our lower Western standards—most of the Tungans we saw were remarkably bad-mannered. Whenever either of us tried to buy anything in the bazaars, either at Bai or at the New City of Aqsu, great louts of Tungans would stand round and exchange what were obviously comments on our appearance and behaviour, bursting every now and again into loud guffaws. We were not very sorry to leave Bai, though we greatly regretted that time did not permit of a visit to the far more interesting and important town of Kucha.

● 487 The 107 miles *viâ* Abad to Aqsu Old City occupied five days.
Our first halt was at the flourishing village of Yaka Ariq on
the right bank of the Muzart River. The main road for the
next 50 miles lies almost entirely over barren and uninteresting
country, so we left it and made due westwards for the curious
red hills of Abad, among which I had hopes of another chance at
the wild sheep. Camping for the night at Ilkache, the last
oasis of the Muzart Valley cultivation, I rose before dawn and
spent a long morning scouring the hills, but saw only several
herds of antelope. Meanwhile D. and the caravan struck
camp at a more reasonable hour and marched to a low pass
among the hills appropriately named the Topa Dawan or
622 "Dusty Pass," where I met them at midday. It was here
224 that we made a new and most picturesque acquaintance,
the Kirghiz headman of Qara Bulaq, Hushur Beg. As I
approached the "Dusty Pass" I saw the solitary figure of a
man on a horse standing on the crest of a ridge. This proved
on closer inspection to be a youngish Kirghiz with a high-cheek-boned,
weather-beaten face, mounted on a shaggy little
Kalmuck pony. On his right wrist, which was protected by
a large white fleece gauntlet and supported on the saddle by
a wooden prop, he carried a magnificent hooded *qara qush* or
black hunting-eagle. This bird, I afterwards found, measured
three feet from beak to tail and over seven feet from wing-tip
to wing-tip; it was a dull black in colour, with a ruff of rust-coloured
feathers, yellow claws, black beak with yellow base
and fine red-brown eyes. From the near side of Hushur Beg's
saddle dangled an object which puzzled me at first; it proved
to be the lure with which he attracted the bird back from
wandering, and consisted of a large ball made of skin from the
heads of antelopes. The Beg turned out to be a thoroughly
good type of man and a real sportsman, very different from the
lazy and untrustworthy "Taghliks" of Pakalik and Tarlak.

492 484 and they expected to reach Kashgar within a month from Aqsu.

•487 For 112 miles after leaving Aqsu we traversed the perfectly flat plain to the north of the Tarim River jungles, within sight of, though not actually along, the famous "Silk Road" first organized by the Han Emperor Wu-ti in the second century B.C., for the transport of Chinese fabrics to the Far West.[1] At an average interval of 15 miles there are halting places with poky little native serais and sometimes a slightly better Chinese rest-house. Each place has a small bazaar of shanties and stalls in which the people of the settlement, or of the nearest oasis, sell food for man and beast. At Chilan, 57 miles from Aqsu, we found ourselves in Kelpin district again; we noticed here a remarkable improvement in the facial type of the people, the women being remarkably handsome with regular, almost Greek, features.

000 The two Chinese troopers deputed by the O.C. Aqsu to escort our caravan as far as Maralbashi caused us much innocent amusement. One of them was comparatively bright and helpful; indeed, except for the fact that he could not fire his carbine, the bolt of which was tied on with a red handkerchief, and that he never mounted his horse without the assistance of a wall at least three feet high, he was quite a useful cavalryman. He had obviously never heard a shot fired in anger; whenever I shot a bird in his presence, or even fired my gun, he became wildly excited, laughing and clapping his hands like a child. But he was at any rate alive; his brother in arms, on the other hand, was the most miserable, opium-sodden wretch I ever saw, even in the Titai's army. We stood him as long as we could, for the sake of the O.C. Aqsu's "face," but the limit was reached the night we came to Yaka Kuduk. The march from Chilan was a moderately long one, and D. and I cantered ahead in the afternoon so as to arrive before dark, expecting the caravan to come in about seven o'clock. To our discomfort, it did not arrive till half-past eight. We questioned Hafiz. "Sahib," he replied, with an apologetic grin, "it was the opium-smoking *chirik*. Last night he finished all the opium he brought with him, and this afternoon he asked us for some. We had none, and he became very angry. Just after sunset he fell off his horse, and we

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[1] The Chinese military road ran along the foot of the Kelpin Tagh a few miles to the north-west of the present route (Stein, "Ruins of Desert Cathay," Vol. II, p. 427).

had to pick him up and put him back on it. After a time 000 he fell off again, and his horse became frightened and kicked off its saddle and upset the baggage-ponies, and they stampeded all over the jungle and many loads came off. It took us a long time to get the caravan started again. As the *chirik* could not sit on his own horse I brought him in across my saddle-bow."

At the next stage, Chadar Kul, we found ourselves among 563 Dulanis, the same cheerful, dirty, good-looking, quarrelsome, disreputable, singularly attractive race whose acquaintance we had made in the spring at Merket. Once more we chafed under the attentions of hordes of male sightseers, once more we marvelled at the beauty of cherubic but incredibly dirty children. Just outside the village we passed two large parties [525] of gamblers, almost all men, dicing under the trees; in the bazaar their wives were minding the shops and doing what little work is done in a Dulani village. The Tarim river 136 jungles, which here began in earnest, held great numbers of "Shaw's pheasant," magnificent birds with plumage of flame-colour shot with purple and tail-feathers barred with black. The sport, indeed, in this neighbourhood was almost too good; besides the woods full of pheasants, the ponds and marsh-lakes swarmed with duck and teal, which had evidently just arrived on their way south. At one place the wild duck actually came and sat on the village pond, eighty yards from the back of the rest-house in which we lodged.

At Tumshuk, forty miles east of Maralbashi, we left the 487 ● main road and struck southwards for about twenty miles to a lonely shepherd's cottage on the south bank of the Tarim, where we spent four most pleasant and restful days encamped in a little grove of desert poplars among the melon-beds. Pheasants, duck, teal and other game abounded, while the brushwood-covered flats were a perfect Zoo for wild life of all kinds.

It was a charming place in the bright autumn weather; 000 the blue river wound close by; to the south rose abruptly from the plain another of the curious ranges of hills which are peculiar to the neighbourhood; within a mile or so lay two beautiful fresh-water lakes, one of them ten miles long and two broad, reflecting in their glassy waters here the crags of the Choka Tagh, there the mighty dunes of the Takla Makan. For we were on the very verge of the great desert; it was beyond those very dunes that Sven Hedin lost all his camels

000 and all but one of his men from thirst, and was with within an ace of perishing himself.

I was interested in the shepherds who lived at the cottage. There were three brothers with their families, the men being in the employ of one of the Maralbashi Begs, Abid Beg. For herding and shearing their master's sheep they received one fleece in ten; out of this wool they made ropes and sacking which they bartered at Maralbashi for flour and cloth. They also trapped foxes and netted fish, which in this river are large and quite good eating. Finally, they grew melons, of which they sold more than they ate. The soil, being salt, was good for melons but for no other crop. The three brothers had at first formed a joint family, but had afterwards ceased to do so owing to quarrels. They continued to live together at the farm, but whereas formerly they had owned three cocks in common, now each family owned one cock, and so on. •487

Recrossing the Tarim on 7th November we marched to Maralbashi, camping on the way at the foot of the highest and boldest of the miniature mountain-ranges of the district, the Mazar Tagh. Outside the town we were received most kindly by our friend the Russian-speaking Amban whom we had met at Merket, Chiu Da-heng. We stayed in the garden of the British Aqsaqal, a venerable Chitrali merchant; here pheasants came to feed every morning and woodcock flitted among the trees, for the charm of Maralbashi is in the proximity of the Tarim jungle, the wild life of which hems it in on all sides. Near by the dying Kashgar River flowed sluggishly, its waters destined to be spent in cultivation ere ever they could join the Tarim. On its bank stood a charming little tiled and whitewashed mausoleum built by our host in memory of his father.

136 We were guests at the Yamen more than once, and there had an opportunity of studying at close quarters some fine specimens Mr. Chiu kept of the peculiar swamp deer of the country. The stag we saw was distinctly larger than the average Scottish red deer and its horns were longer, smoother and more slender; its snout was long with a narrow, thin muzzle. In colour it resembled the red deer, except that its tail was light brown instead of dark. The hind was also bigger than her Scottish counterpart. There was also a fawn, a delightful, little animal with a thick, dark brown coat.

For the five marches between Maralbashi and Kashgar
000 (145 miles) we were lucky in having perfect weather. The

177 boots and overshoes of Kashgar. Besides Wang Tungling of Uch Turfan, I have heard of two or three other cases of Sinized Turkis 647 holding office. Not long ago I met a Bai man of the same type who was passing through Kashgar on his way to the Pamirs as a *wei-yuan* to inquire on behalf of the Urumchi Government into the complaints of the Sariqolis against their Magistrate. Then there was a Mussulman Amban of Kelpin who was relieved of his appointment quite recently after two or three years' tenure; he was not a success, I believe.

Zawa, 1st April.

487 We have been lucky in having perfect weather at this time of year for the crossing of the sandy belt between Zanguya and this place. We might have been caught in one of the sandstorms (Turki *burān*) for which early summer is notorious in these parts. Harding had a most unpleasant time in one last May. Whole caravans have been lost on this section of the road, missing the track in a storm and wandering out into the Takla Makan, where the water is 200 ft. or more below ground-level. For centuries the track has been marked every hundred yards or so on the worst bits by "basket potais" or curious elongated baskets about four feet in length placed on end and filled with sand. It is wonderful how long these last and how the baskets, or remnants of them, remain in position even when upset, as they usually are; stone posts would have sunk into the sand long ago. There are also of course the ordinary "potais" or towers of mud-brick at intervals of ten Chinese *li* (2¼ m.) which are, or ought to be, found along all main roads; these make excellent landmarks.

Khotan, 7th April.

796 The fast of Ramazan began a few days ago, and is rather a trial to us as well as to the greedy Turkis. They miss their food in the daytime; we miss our sleep at night. Badruddin's house where we are staying has a fine garden at the back, but the house itself is in the middle of the bazaar and we get the full benefit of the turning of night into day which marks Ramazan in the towns. The walls of the houses are merely lath and plaster and sounds travel through them like paper. The whole town seems to be talking at once until nearly midnight, when the chief meal of the 24 hours is cleared away. Then at 2.30 a.m. the drums begin beating to awaken the Faithful for the preparation of the second meal of the night. These tom-toms are dreadful; they go on for an hour or more, varied only by the monotonously-chanted refrains of the singing dervishes. From four onwards the whole town is wide awake and busy either cooking, talking or intoning the *sahri* or prayer of dawn. Add to this the normal early-morning noises of Kashgaria, cocks crowing, donkeys braying, birds twittering, pigeons cooing, cows lowing, horses neighing and stumping about in their stalls. . . . If one's blood is well oxygenated, as it is on the march, one listens to this sort of thing for an hour or so and sleeps the rest of the night soundly enough; in a town this is not so easy.

Lop, 8th April.

000 W——, Amban of this district, is a refreshingly unconventional official. Last year when he was late at the wayside tea-drinking

000 was found to be too big to go under the hood of the cart. Tableau! There was nothing for it but to leave the cage behind and put the pelican into the cart by itself. This was done under D.'s supervision (I was busy with case-work and farewell interviews in the house) to the delight of the crowd. Our hopes that the pelican would be able to leave Keriya *incognito* were thus frustrated. Off went the caravan along the Polu road, D., pelican and all. Half an hour later, having ascertained that the coast was clear, I slipped out with Hafiz and galloped by a roundabout route to the ford across the Keriya River on the Cherchen road; here I overtook D. and the cart, which was jogging along with Niaz on guard in front and the curtain carefully drawn behind him as if it concealed my harem. We passed many country-people, families coming in to Keriya market from Oi Toghraq or Niya, wood-sellers driving donkeys loaded with faggots and so on; I wondered what they would think if they knew what was in the cart. Beyond the last fields of the oasis a shallow valley among grassy dunes led to the main river-bed half a mile to the north. For once we blessed the dust-haze of the Takla Makan which veiled our movements from afar. Loitering until a favourable moment when no passers-by were in sight, we dived off the road down the little valley, the lumbering vehicle pitching and swaying like a ship in a storm. Turning a corner we appeared to be absolutely in the wilds and were just congratulating ourselves on having shaken off all possible witnesses, when there on the top of a hillock were two boys watching us. Strong measures were necessary. I knew only too well that if even the smallest child saw us depositing the pelican in the wilderness, the bird's fate would be sealed; it would be recaptured and either done to death or taken back to the Yamen, whence the Amban would undoubtedly send it after us as lost property. . . . I decided to give the boys the fright of their lives, so I galloped straight at them; they ran like hares, I pursuing, until we arrived together at the small farm where they lived. Here I informed an agitated mamma that if she valued the children's lives she would send them to bed and keep them there.

Fate now smiled on us and we found that we could take the cart right down to the edge of the marshes. Here we took the long-suffering pelican out of "purdah." It was worth all our toil and anxiety, and more, to see the beatific expression on his face when he found himself once more on his native heath. On the grassy edge of a clear pool he stood proudly with his poor clipped wings outspread, as if offering thanks to the pale sun for his new-found liberty. But we could not leave him in too open a place, and so Niaz and I carried him down a secluded channel among the marshes and deposited him where no enemy would find him, safe from the Yamen and its forcible feeding, safe from the spying urchins of Keriya. . . . And there we hope he will find a living among the frogs and minnows until kindly Nature has lengthened his clipped feathers (already half grown), so that he may spread his wings and fly away northwards, far over the Takla Makan to the untrodden solitudes whence he came.

•487 Before returning to Khotan we treated ourselves to a long-anticipated holiday trip among the Altun Tagh or "Mountains

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

of Gold" which form the northern rim of the Tibetan plateau. 487 ●
Our first objective was the hill-village of Polu, three short
marches south of Keriya; thence we proposed to visit the oases
along the foot of the Qaranghu Tagh or Mountains of Darkness,
that wildest and most inaccessible central section of the
Kunlun which rises in the great massif of K 5 to a height of
23,890 feet. The trip proved somewhat disappointing, for
the hateful dust-haze persisted and we saw little along the road
beyond our immediate surroundings. Only once, for a short
hour or two, did the veil lift. Nevertheless the journey was
interesting in the extreme and on the whole enjoyable. Very
few explorers had visited this secluded bay beneath the northern
ramparts of Tibet, and the region may certainly be classed
among the remotest and least-known inhabited corners of
High Asia, outside Tibet itself.

The village of Boghaz Langar, at which the last of the 361
above extracts was written, is the southernmost village of the
main oasis of Keriya and lies at a height of 5,150 feet above
the sea, or 700 feet higher than the town. Close by we visited 778
the famous shrines of Imam Ghazz 'Ali, one of the heroes of
local Muhammadan tradition, and of a lady known as Bu
Hanifa. The place is remarkable for its plane-trees of immense [137]
age and bulk, veritable mountains of ancient wood, gnarled
and monstrous like boulders in a torrent-bed. Next day we 487
marched up the left bank of the Keriya River, passing one or
two small isolated oases, and camped at a point 6,500 feet
above the sea where the stream cuts through the foothills in
an almost straight canyon 300 or 400 feet deep. It was a
curious camp; though our tents were pitched fifty yards from
the edge, the river could be neither seen nor heard and we
seemed to be in the middle of a bare rolling moor of sand and
scrub. Every drop of water for man and beast had to be [312]
brought by hand in buckets and gourds up a terrifying cliff-track
known only to the guides we had brought with us.
Next morning the haze was thicker than ever and we could
see nothing of the massifs of the Altun Tagh, 21,000 feet high,
which we knew impended over us at a distance of scarcely 25
miles. For hours we toiled up sandy tracks, new reaches and
abysses of the river-gorge coming dimly into view at each corner.
I was impressed by the quantities of drift-sand everywhere;
even at this height the whole hill-side seemed to be silted up
with sand blown from the distant Takla Makan, in marked
contrast with the approaches to the Kashgar Range which we

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

● 487 knew so well, four hundred miles to the north-west. At mid-
day we were met by the friendly people of Polu who had
pitched for us a tiny tent made of sacks on a cliff-top 800
feet above the river-bed. With the indefatigable hospitality
of remoter Asia, they had brought all the way from Polu,
several miles further up among the mountains, an enormous
meal of boiled sheep, bread, tea and hard-boiled eggs dyed
bright blue, the favourite colour of Khotan.[1]

361/ Polu is the largest of the hill-villages at the western end of
the Altun Tagh or Mountains of Gold, a branch of the Kunlun
stretching for a thousand miles to the E.N.E. until it merges
487 with the Nan Shan. The relative importance of Polu is due
to the fact that it commands the only possible track leading
up over the Kunlun to the northern plateau of Tibet and so
to Ladakh and India. The defiles on the north side of the
pass are exceedingly narrow and almost, if not quite, impossible
for pack transport of any kind ; but for a distance of 530
miles, from the Hindu Tash Pass (17,750 ft.) over the Sanju
range in the west to the Qarasai gap above Cherchen in the
east, there is no other path at all by which men can cross the
tremendous barrier of the Kunlun. Polu is picturesquely
361/ situated at a height of 8,500 feet on a ridge between two
branches of the Keriya River's chief tributary. Its fields are
lined with tall poplars and dotted with clumps of fine planes
and walnuts. The village consists of closely-packed, flat-
topped houses of wood and stone with curious raised skylights
in the middle of the roof, and has a look of Baltistan or Tibet
which differentiates it at once from the settlements of the hill
"Sarts" and Kirghiz of the Kashgar Range and the Tien Shan.
[563] Stein thinks that there may be Tibetan blood in the people,
and certainly they do not regard themselves as belonging to
the same race as the people of Khotan and Keriya. Polu
and neighbouring villages do not belong to Keriya district,
as one would have expected ; they are grouped with Imamlär,
Chakar, Ħasha, Nura and other oases of the great "bay"

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[1] The word *kōk* (blue) is often used in Khotan as a synonym for "beautiful," without conveying any particular colour. I heard a minstrel sing :

Sai buida tōrt tufak
Tōrtilärsi kōk tufak.
Four heifers on the desert's edge
And all four of them blue (i.e. lovely) heifers.

The reason why the shells of presentation eggs are always coloured is because white is unlucky, being the colour of death and mourning.

Titai was reported to be arming. Could it be that the civil war which had been so long endemic in the inner provinces of China was now to spread to the Far West? Reluctantly I decided to curtail my homeward tour-programme and abandon a plan which I had long been nursing; this was to climb one or more of the easternmost summits of the Sanju Range and reconnoitre from the north the untrodden gorges of the Qaraqash[1] River, 60 miles long, which had baffled even Stein. But the prospect of a fourth journey along the well-beaten Pialma-Moji-Goma track did not appeal to us, least of all under what we fondly expected would be the grilling sun of May. We therefore decided to take the comparatively little-used upper road to Karghalik viâ Duwa, Sanju and Kosh Tagh and thus break ground that was new to us.

487 On 3rd May at Zawa we bade farewell to the Kingdom of Jade and crossed the sand-hills of the Pigeon Shrine to lonely Takhtuban Langar, where the water is drawn from a well 200 feet deep. Thence leaving the main road we struck south-west, reaching Lāmūs in the Duwa valley late in the evening after a gruelling march of 36 miles. It was here that I visited the charming old Haji who narrated to me the local legend explaining the name of Lamus, recorded by me in another chapter.[2] I shall never forget the scene in the central room of the Haji's farm where Murad Qari and I sat sipping tea and talking to the old man and his well-mannered sons. The family were evidently animal-lovers. A very fat white pigeon sat on the back of a Qur'an-stand and joined in the conversation with such loud cooings that we had to raise our voices to make ourselves heard. An immense tortoiseshell cat purred furiously if anyone even looked as if he intended to stroke it. Best of all, a plump white lamb walked unconcernedly about the room throughout the proceedings, finally jumping up on the daïs beside me and helping itself from a plate of raisins on the low Chinese table by my side. When lifted down it repeated the performance, the Haji remarking delightfully that the lamb had become his *mihman* (guest) as well as I!

Resting a day at Lamus we performed another long march across the *sai* by Poski Langar to Chaskam in the beautiful Sanju Valley, where we halted another day for sightseeing. Then the weather changed and we had a most unpleasant march through Sanju Bazaar and along the main Leh-Yarkand

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[1] Not to be confused with the Qaratash River in the Qungur region.
[2] See p. 181.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

● 487 caravan-route to Sulaghiz Langar. Icy wind and torrential rain caught us unprepared on the top of a pass, and we had to gallop for it 11 miles, only to find scarcely even the humblest accommodation available at the tiny settlement of Sulaghiz. Next day it was still cold and cloudy, but on 9th May when we marched to Oi Toghraq we were rewarded with the longest panorama of snows we ever saw, even in Chinese Turkistan. From the eastern end of the Sanju range they stretched in an immense arc to the northernmost peaks of the Takhta Kuram west of Karghalik, a glittering panoply of ice 180 miles long.

The rest of our return journey must be passed over quickly. Yarkand was reached on 14th May, and eight days later we were back at Kashgar, having covered a total distance of 936 miles on the last and by no means the least enjoyable of our longer tours in Southern Sinkiang.

008 home leave, and the opportunity of a long spell was not to be missed. My successor, Lieut.-Col. R. Lyall, I.A., was already on his way from England and was expected to arrive towards the end of August. There was just time to treat ourselves to a farewell visit to the Alps of Qungur, where much mapping still remained to be done and many desirable photographs were as yet untaken. I postponed our start until 22nd July, partly in the hope of finding better weather at Kaying and less snow on my high climbs, partly because by going a month later than the previous year I hoped to secure the seeds of some of the plants which had then been in flower. This • 487 time I decided to make first for the upper Yapchan Jilgha, where we had discovered a delightful camping-place on our way back from Kaying the year before; my object was to reconnoitre and if possible gain access to the Tigarmansu Jilgha, a valley immediately to the north-west of Kaying but completely cut off from it by the tremendous precipices of Kōk Dōng and Sarigh Yon.

July was unusually hot at Kashgar, and there was also a perfect plague of wasps brought on by the superabundance of fruit, which rotted in our orchard for want of enough mouths in the Consulate to eat it. The heat also caused the summer floods to rise to abnormal heights, and 15 miles from Kashgar we had one of the worst river-crossings I ever experienced. At one time I thought we would have to go home and wait for the floods to subside, which would probably have meant the abandonment of the trip. It was therefore even more pleasant than usual to find ourselves on 26th July encamped among the fir-woods and wild-rose thickets of the beautiful Yapchan alp, right opposite the magnificent red cliffs of Bozarga and Bele Tōk. Two days later, with an irreducible minimum of retinue and baggage carried on yaks, we dived into the great red sandstone gorge and crawled once more up the secret track to Bozarga. Crossing the At Bel pass (12,000 feet) without difficulty we zigzagged 2,000 feet down the grassy flank of Kōk Dōng and came to the prosperous-looking encampment of Oi, the summer headquarters of a minor Beg and seven or eight families of Kirghiz. Here, to my surprise, I found we were no longer in the Yangi Hissar district as in the Qaratash valley, but under the jurisdiction of the magistrate of the Chinese Pamirs at Tashqurghan, eight long marches away. The Beg did his best to make us stay the night with him and go back across the pass next day without venturing down into the wild

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

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Tigarmansu Jilgha, the path to which he described as very difficult. The situation was saved, however, by an excellent Kirghiz of Tigarmansu called Yunus Akhun, a name and title which may be translated with some accuracy as "Mr. Jonah." This man, who reminded me strongly of the best type of Highland ghillie, proved to be of Bokharan origin, his father having migrated to the Chinese Pamirs from the Qaratigin mountains, which divide Bokhara from Ferghana. He cordially invited us to his valley on behalf of his uncle, Sikilak Beg, the headman of the three families which constituted the entire population of the Tigarmansu Jilgha. He said he would guide us and that the path was quite easy. Seeing that we were determined to proceed, the Beg of Oi lent us six fresh yaks in place of our tired ones and bade us God-speed.

The track proved up-and-down and very narrow, but not dangerous, and the sun had not yet set when we topped the last col and found ourselves looking up the deep trough-like valley of the Tigarmansu or "Water of the Mill." Descending by a steep track to the foaming glacier-stream we forded it and made our way up through fields of meadowsweet till we came to the first tall firs. Here there was an old mill from which the valley derived its name, with a shrine and a sacred spring close by; and here we were met by tall, handsome old Sikilak Beg. The tents of the Kirghiz were pitched a mile further up in a clearing in the thick forest which clothed what I afterwards found to be the ancient terminal moraine of the Tigarmansu Glacier. "Mr. Jonah" and his family insisted on turning out of their *aq-oi* for us and camping *alfresco* among the trees a few yards away, and altogether we were made very welcome. We soon found out the reason of their *empressement*, which was that the Kirghiz of the Qungur region had been talking about D. and her medicines and tea-parties ever since our last visit; with the result that now there was the keenest competition among the different valleys to receive a visit from us. A girl from Kaying had married a Tigarmansu man since the previous summer, and now greeted D. as an old friend.

We could only allow ourselves three days in this valley, and to our disgust it was misty and rainy nearly the whole time. One of my objects had been to climb the Dilbagh "pass," a col about 13,000 feet high leading over to the Qurghan Kōl Jilgha, another large unexplored glacier-valley of Qungur; from this col I hoped at last to see the inner arcana of the great

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

487 range. But when we tried it the first morning, down came the clouds and we had to turn back half-way. I had also hoped to obtain a close view of the needle-like Shiwakte group from some vantage-point near the head of the Tigarmansu Jilgha; but the peaks which shut in the head of the valley never cleared of cloud at all. I had therefore to confine my attentions to the valley itself, of which I made a plane-table sketch. At the foot of the ancient terminal moraine on which the camp was pitched we found a remarkable phenomenon; a flood of shell-pink water gushed out from among the roots of the great firs and joined the glacier stream, the waters of which it perceptibly tinged with its own exquisite hue. Two miles above the camp, at the foot of the existing glacier 13,350 feet above the sea, we found the source of the pink colour; in the moraine were beds of red clay over which a strong stream flowed from the glacier for a hundred yards before disappearing into the earth. At [35] various points in the valley I noticed a greenish tinge in the rocks, which suggested copper. The Kirghiz told me that a rich vein of copper ore had once been worked in a terrifying and barely accessible cleft which they pointed out to me, high up on the precipitous north-west face of Kōk Dōng; it was so rich that in spite of the primitiveness of their methods the Kirghiz had for years smelted the ore and made pots and pans and cartridge cases out of the copper. In recent years the mine had been abandoned and its very existence kept dark for fear of the Titai's men hearing about it, as this would have meant the mine being taken over and the Kirghiz forced to work in it for the benefit of the Titai. It was for the same reason that they kept so quiet about the track over the At Bel Pass from the Yapchan Jilgha, which we should never have found for ourselves if old Samsaq Bai had not shown it to us. The Tigarmansu glen is accessible by this track alone, at any rate in summer; there is no exit from its upper end, and its lower reaches lie through a deep and narrow gorge impassable in the high-water season.

On our way back to the Yapchan alp, where we had left our tents, we visited Samsaq Bai and his clan, who were encamped this year just behind the fir-clad crest of one of the great precipices of Zor Qir. A grassy ridge dotted with clumps of juniper and fir, very much like a well-laid-out park, jutted out 1,500 feet above the Yapchan valley like the prow of a ship; all round the *aq-ois* the turf was starred with purple anemones, gentians and marigolds. The grazing was rich and the view

●487 superb ; but the place had one disadvantage. There was no water nearer than the spring in the Bozarga glen 600 feet below, from which the unfortunate ladies, in addition to their other multifarious duties, had to carry up all the water required in the camp.

From Yapchan we marched to Kaying Bashi, where we camped once more at the lovely alp below the forest. We could spare but eight days for the Happy Valley, and were fortunate in having four of them brilliantly clear. On one of these D. and I climbed with yaks to a height of 14,500 feet on the Torbashi Glacier. After lunch I left D. in a sunny corner with an orderly and climbed another 1,500 feet to the top of the knife-edge ridge which divides the Torbashi branch of the Kaying Jilgha from the head of the Tigarmansu Jilgha. There was a great deal of soft snow about, and with only a sturdy Kirghiz boy called Tash to help me I had considerable difficulty in reaching the top with my camera and surveying instruments. But it was well worth it, for I obtained not only some exceedingly useful "rays" for my map but one of the very finest mountain photographs I have ever secured, of the ice-clad peak of Shiwakte I (19,400 feet) piercing the clouds right opposite me at a distance of only 2½ miles. (Plate 164.)

Two days later, on 4th August, I carried out a plan I had nursed ever since we had first found our way to Kaying. This was to climb out of the valley at its head and reconnoitre the Chimghan Jilgha and the main Shiwakte group beyond. It will be remembered that I had hoped to do this the summer before, but had been baffled by the snow which closed the "pass" even in mid-July. Now, however, the Kirghiz pronounced the Kepek Bel sufficiently clear of snow for the crossing to be attempted ; even so, the 1,000 foot couloir at the top was so steep and so filled with ice that there was no question of yaks going up it. I chose the two best *mergens* or ibex-stalkers in the valley as my guides, Phoken and Tümür by name, sturdy lads who looked regular wild men of the woods in their great sheep-skin caps ; at the last moment the boy Tash, who looked like fourteen but said he was twenty, insisted on coming with me. The party was made up by our staunch Hunza cragsman, Sangi Khan. Leaving D. in camp for a night by herself in charge of the trusty Hafiz, we started at 5 a.m. with a supply of cold food and Bovril, my two cameras, a sleeping-bag, and my plane table and instruments tied up in a sack. We did the first 4,000 feet on yaks, then left them to graze on the topmost pastures of the Kaying glacier-moraine while we attacked the couloir. On our left sheets of ice at angles varying from 45° to 60° came down from the precipices which enclose the head of the Kaying Jilgha and formed a couloir with the almost vertical cliffs of Shiwakte I on our right, along which we had to crawl the whole way. In several places steps had to be cut across tongues of ice running up into the cliff, and the kit had often to be sent up from hand to hand over difficult sections. Shortly after ten we reached the col, and I had a thrilling moment as I clambered to the top of a boulder and gazed over an imposing array of ice-clad ranges to the south. The atmospheric conditions were not good enough for a worthy photograph, but I was able to secure a complete set of "rays" which afterwards enabled me to fix the position of the mountains I saw. They proved to be those on the south side of the Chimghan Jilgha and its tributary the Tersōze, and one of them at least to be more than 22,000 feet high. None of them had been seen from this side by Western eyes before. It was disappointing to find that the Shiwakte peaks were hidden by a row of black aiguilles like the teeth of a saw which came down from the right. In trying to shelter the hypsometer from the wind I knocked it over and broke the thermometer; luckily I had a spare one with me, with which I obtained a height of 15,230 feet for the top of the pass.

The descent on the south side into a branch of the Chimghan Jilgha called Aghalistan proved easy enough, the way leading first down a small glacier and then at 13,000 feet striking a very large one called by the Kirghiz Aq Tash or "White Rock," obviously from its brilliant serac which is visible from a great distance. There was no sign of any track; the pass is seldom used, and we were the first over it that season. By the time we reached this point the clouds had shut down, and I could only see the lower portion of the vast precipices at the head of the main glacier, which I took to be those of the elusive Shiwakte. Further down we were met by two Kirghiz herdsmen, who were astonished to see us but led us hospitably to their huts. At my request they sent word to their headman, Sayat Beg, whose encampment they told us was a long way further down at the junction of the Aghalistan with the main Chimghan Jilgha. I had intended to spend the night there, but the weather was not promising and I was nervous about being cut off from Kaying and D., perhaps for weeks, by heavy snow on the pass; besides which I was suffering from a severe headache due to eyestrain brought on by long hours of peering through the sight-rule of my plane-table at the top of the pass and on the way down. I therefore decided to stay where I was and re-cross the Kepek next morning. Sayat Beg arrived during the afternoon and gave me much interesting information about his valley and the Qaratash basin in general. He told me among other things that there was no outlet whatever at the head of the Chimghan Jilgha, nothing but "*muz tagh*" or "ice-mountain" which he vaguely designated "Shiwakte"; that at the head of the Tersōze or southern branch of the jilgha there was a very difficult pass, worse even than the one I had come over, which led over to Little Qara Kul on the Pamirs; and that there were no fir-trees in the Chimghan Jilgha or in any of its tributaries.

My head was so bad that I could eat nothing that night and went to bed at nine in a somewhat depressed frame of mind on the floor of one of the huts. In spite of the elevation (over 12,000 feet) it was surprisingly mild and I slept well enough till four, when I awoke blessedly free from headache. To my joy I found that it had cleared up, so after a good breakfast I started at half-past five up the mountain-side. I was rewarded with the most marvellous spectacle I have ever seen. The Shiwakte peaks stood round the head of the Aq Tash basin in a glorious semicircle, their ice-pinnacles gleaming in the dawn, mighty glaciers hanging from their sides like frozen waterfalls thousands of feet high. The clouds were already collecting round them and by eight had completely hidden them once more, but long ere this I had secured some fine pictures and had also completed my plane-table sketch. The mountain-side was alive with Tibetan snow-cock, whose mournful cry, not unlike that of whaups on Scottish moors, sounded in my ears as I worked.

Our descent from the Kepek Pass into the Kaying Jilgha later in the morning was not without incident. It was perceptibly warmer than the day before, evidently banking up for heavy rain, and the ice was very soft. The steps we had made the previous day had melted, and new ones had to be cut; rocks loosened by the thaw came buzzing down from the cliffs above and had to be dodged; nor was it safe to avoid them by venturing out on the steeply-pitched glacier, because the thin coating of flat stones and frozen stones over the crevasses might now be insufficient to bear one's weight. As it was,

● 487 the Beg, who at my request came over with us to investigate some complaint of the Kaying people, had a narrow escape. He was just in front of me as we filed across an arm of the glacier, when suddenly he disappeared up to his armpits. The *débris* of flat stones which lay on top of the ice held him up, and we soon fished him out; but I noticed with a slight shudder, peering down into the hole, that his legs had been dangling over a crevasse of unknown depth. Near the bottom of the couloir we had to jump off the edge of the glacier on to a steep slope of loose stones, and in doing so started a stone-slide which plunged *under* the snowfield we had just left and went on roaring away underneath for a long time. At last, however, we found ourselves safely on the flowery moraine of the main Kaying glacier, where by arrangement a Kirghiz lad was waiting for us with the yaks.

The rain held off during our last four days at Kaying, but the clouds shut down more and more heavily and further survey operations were out of the question. We spent our time partly with the Kirghiz, whom we entertained at a big tea-party followed by games and races, partly in collecting and drying plants for Kew. It was disappointing to find that although we were leaving the valley a month later than in 1923, scarcely any of the flowers had yet seeded. Evidently maturing had been delayed by the exceptionally cold and boisterous weather which we had experienced in May on the return journey from Khotan.[1]

Our visits to Kaying, however, had not been fruitless. Though clumsy and amateurish enough, my plane-table sketches, sets of rays, panoramas and other material afterwards enabled Major K. Mason of the Survey of India, who has made the cartography of the Pamir region his own, to fill in with considerable detail the blank patch in Sir Aurel Stein's map which that distinguished explorer advised me to investigate. Those interested in the topography and orography of this remarkable region will find a full account of it in my paper on "The Alps of Qungur" in the "Geographical Journal" for November 1925, to which is appended a note by Major Mason on his compilation of my material. According to Major Mason, what he is pleased to call my explorations ". . . . fill in several important blanks in our knowledge of the eastern flanks of the Qungur massif. They give a very

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[1] Experienced also by the 1924 Mount Everest Expedition, 700 miles to the south-east.

487 good picture of the 'peripheral gorges of the Pamir plateau,' and while emphasizing the difficulties of the ground, reveal a certain amount of vegetation and habitation of which we had previously no knowledge whatever . . . . One of the outstanding features of the exploration is the further evidence of the existence of Qungur II. Its great featureless dome has been the cause of uncertainty for years. Its height is not yet settled, but we know now that it competes with Qungur I for the post of the highest point of the Pamirs."

On 9th August we said good-bye to the Happy Valley and our Kirghiz friends. We still like to think that they were sorry to see the last of us. The morning that we crossed the Chopkana Pass was misty and lowering, and my farewell impression of Kaying Bashi is of the valley as I saw it at about ten o'clock the evening before. Heavy clouds half-filled the sky and haze the valley; in a gap right above the Shiwakte sailed the moon, her light shining full upon the glacier-stream which sped past me down its stony course. The night was calm and brooding; the haze veiled everything except the gleaming river and the icy crown of the great mountain; but standing out black even against the blackness rose on one side the nearer firs, on the other the needle-points of Zumurrat, far up into the starless heavens. All else—the lower precipices, the forests, the snouts of the big glaciers—all was wrapped in darkness and mystery; only the river and the eternal snows glowed in the dim radiance of the moonlight. As I gazed spell-bound, there came into my memory the song of the shepherd-minstrel at Polu:

> The Power of God created the mountains, the mountains;
> Then because it was dark among the mountains, He created the moon.

3: Skrine G-3 (1922-1924) 1926 All Sinkiang All

000 were waiting with quantities of their delicious coffee and cakes laid out on a cool spot among the willows on the river's edge. As I drank my last cup, to my surprise I saw the Taoyin's carriage with an escort of Chinese cavalry fording the river, and when I came to the road again there was the new Taoyin's wife and the chief Yamen Beg with all the arrangements for a farewell tea-drinking set up in a wayside baker's shop. This lady and I had only recently made each other's acquaintance, so our good-byes were perhaps somewhat stereotyped. But they were by no means the last. Two miles farther on and quite six from Kashgar, Aisha Khan and most of the wives of the Consulate staff were assembled. They had left Chini Bagh before me in carts and had arranged their little tea-drinking in a field about fifty yards from the road, the carts being drawn up so as to screen us from the gaze of passers-by. I choked down a little tea, but cut the party short for they were all crying and it was all I could do to keep a stiff upper lip. They dropped their veils and came with me as far as the road.

"I said good-bye and rode off, but stood for a moment before reaching a turn in the road and looked back. I shall never forget the picture the women made, standing together under the trees, with the afternoon sun slanting through the branches on to the blue and red and purple of their dresses. Then I turned a corner, and they were hidden from sight."

● 487 September and October are the best months in the year for trekking in High Asia, and we did not hurry down the road to India. As far as Tashqurghan we travelled by an entirely different route from that which we had followed on the way to Kashgar in 1922. Instead of entering the mountains south of Yangi Hissar and crossing the Kashka Su, Ter Art, Yambulak and Chichiklik passes, we marched south-west to Tashmalik, through the Gez gorges to Bulunkul and thence southwards across the Pamirs to Tagharma and the Sariqol valley. This is the route used by the Consulate couriers all the year round and by ordinary travellers during the low-water season. Its length is about the same as that of the Chichiklik route, but it has the advantage of rising gradually to one easy pass only 13,600 feet high instead of crossing four steep ones going up to over 16,000 feet. On the other hand, during the six high-water months (say 15th April–15th October) the Gez valley is impassable for 25 miles between the lowest of the bridges in the gorge and its mouth near Tashmalik. To avoid this the traveller between Kashgar and Bulunkul usually crosses the "Nine Passes" already mentioned, two days' hot and toilsome scrambling over ridge after ridge among the barren outer ranges to the east of the lower Gez. This did not appeal to me, and I worked out a route which I hoped would serve the triple purpose of avoiding the Nine Passes, reconnoitring a new "blank patch" which promised to be at least as interesting as the Alps of Qungur, and materially assisting my survey of the latter region.

From the top of the Zor Qir ridge above Bozarga in July 1923 Samsaq Bai had pointed out to me a pass called the Arpa Bel, about 20 miles away on the north side of the Gez valley between the Chakragil massif and a subsidiary peak called Sargalang (14,900 feet). He told me that it was regularly used by the local people, and led over from the main valley near Gez Qaraul to the Oitagh Jilgha, which he said was a very fine valley with fir-woods and rich pastures and many inhabitants. This pass was free from snow and did not look much more than 13,000 feet high; no European so far as I knew had crossed it or visited the alps of the Upper Oitagh Jilgha at the foot of the tremendous north-eastern precipices of Chakragil. More important still, if only the weather was clear I would obtain from it an extremely valuable cross-view of Qungur and the peaks at the head of the Tigarmansu and Qurghan Kul Jilghas from the north. Instead, therefore, of crossing the Nine Passes we forded the Gez with some difficulty above Tashmalik, struck up the long Oitagh Jilgha and after camping for three days near its head crossed the Arpa Bel to Gez Qaraul.

The beauty and grandeur of the scenery we found at the head of the Oitagh Jilgha surpassed even the Alps of Qungur, and we bitterly regretted being unable to pay it more than a flying visit; especially as the inexorable dust-haze of summer—the season was still exceptionally warm everywhere—robbed me of the photographs I might have secured had we been able to wait. On our third and fourth nights from Kashgar we halted at a village of small stone farmsteads called Agh Aghzi, eight miles up the Oitagh valley from its junction with the Gez. The inhabitants we found to be "Taghliks" or mountain-dwelling Turkis, "Sarts" as the Russians would call them. They were unanimous in their deprecation of any attempt on our part to penetrate further up the *jilgha* or cross into the Gez Valley by the Arpa Bel. That pass, they said, was exceedingly high and steep, and could not be crossed except with the help of yaks, which were not to be had. They were evidently surprised and rather alarmed at my knowing about it at all; I gathered that they kept the existence of the Arpa Bel as quiet as possible, for fear lest the Chinese should hear

• 487 about and make it the main summer route to Tashqurghan. This would have meant the local people being forced to keep the track in repair, build bridges etc., as well as provide transport for officials using the route. I was interested to hear that two European travellers had been in the valley before, but neither of them had been further than the village of Pilal, 8 miles above Agh Aghzi; although the Oitagh Jilgha is easily accessible compared with the Kaying and other glens of the Alps of Qungur, no European had been to its head or across the Arpa Bel.

On 9th September we continued our march. Seven miles above Agh Aghzi the valley divides, the left or Pilal branch being inhabited by Taghliks and the right or At Oinak branch by Kirghiz. Passing Pilal village with its one immense plane-tree the track led up a wide valley at the head of which towered, incredibly high and blazing white even through the haze, the mighty ice-wall and splintered peaks of Chakragil.[1] Enticing "alps" below the forests of fir which clothed the steep sides of the valley beckoned to us, and we pressed on full of excited anticipation. The villagers had prepared a shepherd's hut for us two miles above Pilal at the mouth of the Arpa Jilgha which, ribbed with forest, led steeply up to the pass. But we would have none of it and camped two miles further up on a delectable meadow among thickets of fir, ash and rowan, perched high above the glacier stream and protected from the noonday sun by high wooded crags and pinnacles of limestone rock. Three *aq-ois* stood on another knoll just beyond and a crystal-clear stream bubbled out of mosses and grass near by. Here we spent three days, all we could spare, exploring the neighbourhood and making friends with the Taghliks.

/33 It did not require a trained observer to realize that the region in which we found ourselves was a perfect paradise alike for the geologist and for the naturalist. Its chief peculiarity is the relatively low elevation of the head of the Oitagh Jilgha. This forms a kind of recess or alcove in the precipitous north-east face of Chakragil, 14,000 feet high, into which the glaciers fall and thus push down their snouts to a much lower level than

[1] This name seems to represent the words *Chikir Ôghil* or "the shepherd station of Chikir." I found a Chikir glen and pastures at the head of the Oitagh, on the north side. Stein gives the name "Chakragil" to the peak at the head of the Bostan Arche valley, some miles to the north-west, which he explored on his third journey. If a name is required for the whole massif, Chakragil would seem the most suitable one.

65/ be commuted at 12 tengas (2*s.*) per *charak*, the market price being 4 tengas.[1]

356 Talking to the mountain people one occasionally gets amusing little side-lights on the difficulties of house-keeping in an *aq-oi*. Among the woods at Chikir Aghzi we came upon some families striking camp. They said they were moving to an open piece of ground only a mile lower down.

"What is wrong with this camping-ground?" we asked.

"The mice have found us out and eat our bread," was the reply.

"Why don't you keep cats to eat the mice?"

"Because the cats would drink our milk!"

This was unanswerable, as anyone who had seen the interior of an *aq-oi* and its carefully-guarded "dairy" ought to have realized.

• 487 We crossed the Arpa Bel on 13th September, after spending the night at a chilly camping-ground above the highest fir-woods on the north-side. On the way up, when I was behind trying to take photographs, D. saw a pretty sight while she was waiting for me to come up. A herd of great shaggy yaks, unattended by any herdsman, came trooping down through the forest to drink at the stream. They came with such a rush, bringing earth and stones with them, that for a moment she thought it was an avalanche. They stood about in the water and on the grassy banks of the torrent, exactly like Highland cattle. They were still there when I came up, but my cortège disturbed them and they bunched together in the stream-bed as if awaiting attack, spoiling the picture. The dust-haze was worse than ever at the top of the pass, which I found to be 13,350 feet above the sea, and nothing whatever was visible of what would have been an unrivalled view. Both from the surveying and from the photographic point of view it was one of the worst pieces of luck I have ever had; for according to the calendar it was, or ought to have been, autumn and the clearest time of the year.

The Arpa Bel is a decidedly stiff pass, 6,000 feet on either side without a break, but although nothing whatever has been done to the track it is not actually dangerous. Still, it was as well that we had hired from the Pilal people fifteen donkeys to share the loads with our carrier's ponies. We had one unfortunate casualty among the latter. One of them, though it was carrying less than half an ordinary load, showed signs of weakness on the way up. At a point where the track traversed the face of the Arpa Bel ridge this pony suddenly collapsed and rolled fifty yards down the mountain-side, load and all. The carrier, Amin Jan, was after it like a knife, closely followed by myself and two other men. The slope was steep but not precipitous, and we were able to stop the pony rolling further. It was unhurt and reached the top of the pass safely, its load carried by hand. On the way down the south-side Amin Jan put a very light load on it, thinking that there would be no more climbing and that all would be well. Unfortunately about 1,000 feet below the top there was a short but very steep ascent where the track rounded a ridge ; here the pony was again seized with staggers and fell 150 feet, being killed instantaneously. There must have been something wrong with the pony, which had had three days' rest and good grazing at Oitagh and was the only one to be affected by the pass ; but we were sorry for Amin Jan, who wept bitterly at his loss, and we also regretted the spoiling of our own record. Until then we had not lost a single animal on any of our journeys.

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[1] The object is to encourage cultivation, even in pastoral country, and thus increase the population. Similarly, the Chinese encourage the planting of trees in the plains by collecting the land revenue partly in the form of timber.

The following day we rejoined the Gez Dara at 7,600 feet by a glen called the Chuchul Jilgha which was agreeably full of red-legged partridge and pigeons. The road up the Gez gorges is well kept up by the Chinese and is provided with solid wooden bridges where necessary. It is stones, stones all the way and one's horse must be walked every yard ; but there is no difficulty or danger whatever, unless (as occasionally happens) a bridge has been recently washed away. The grandeur of the scenery is indescribable. The Gez, which here breaks through from the Pamirs between the great massifs of Qungur and Chakragil, is second only to the Yarkand River among the mountain streams of Kashgaria, and its cataracts in summer are a sight to behold. For 16 miles we followed the torrent which twisted and coiled among precipices rising higher and higher at every turn ; in the evening at Khapa Gumbaz we looked straight up on one side to the summit of Qungur I, 15,500 feet above us and only 5 miles away, on the other to that of Chakragil not much less high. The air had cleared, two days too late for the Arpa Bel, and we saw the tops of the great massifs clearly.

●487 After spending a cold and uncomfortable night at Khafa Gumbaz (the name means "Domes of Wrath") we emerged on to the Pamirs by the windy gate of Bulunkul and camped at a little mud fort south of the lake amid typical Pamir scenery. 704 The garrison of this lonely post consisted of an out-at-elbows lieutenant and three men, all married to Kirghiz women. One of the soldiers interested me very much. A hawk-nosed, black-avised, alert little man in an enormous astrakhan hat appeared at the door of our *aq-oi* with an accordion in his hands, stood to attention smartly and entered without further ado. He told me he was a Russian Kirghiz from Tokmak in Semirechia, whence he had come three years before; he looked to me more like a Noghai or "Tartar," but might have been a Tartar-Kirghiz half-breed. He was very friendly and insisted on treating us to a concert on his "garmonie" (the Russian form of the word "harmonium" which they use for accordion). On that wheezy old instrument he played various long and unmelodious tunes in our tiny *aq-oi*. It was a painful performance, but we hated to hurt his feelings and were most appreciative; he was so very obviously a spy from across the frontier, and in so lonely and desolate a spot we could well understand his joy at finding at last a job of work to do.

487 During the next four days we wandered unhurriedly across the Lake District of the Chinese Pamirs, halting a day close to the north shore of the Little Qara Kul and another at Subashi. Here the Qungur and Muz Tagh Ata massifs stood round us in a vast amphitheatre, their dazzling domes and ridges of ice reflected exquisitely in the sapphire waters of the lakes. It was a pleasant time; the weather was perfect and the Kirghiz charming; sport was good, the lakes and marshes teeming with geese, ducks, teal and snipe. Near the Qara Kul we were met by our old friend Nadir Beg, the tall and jovial "British Watchman in Sarikol," with a regular cortège of Kirghiz and the inevitable wayside tea-drinking. Earlier in the same day we had an interesting *rencontre*. A party of 788 about twenty travel-stained and weather-beaten old men clad in ragged sheepskin cloaks and hats came riding northwards over the pamir. They proved to be Turki pilgrims returning from Mecca, the remnants of a party of fifty or more who had left Kashgar in April for the Holy Cities. They had had a terrible time, they said, on the high passes of the Hindu Kush between Tashqurghan and Chitral, and several of the

to the brilliant clearness of the weather my plane-table and cameras kept me very busy. The "rays" and telepanoramas I obtained of Qungur and the Shiwakte from this side proved afterwards of the greatest value to Major Mason in his compilation of my topographical material.[1]

The cold at nights was severe, and the development of my plates and films was carried on under difficulties. Two or three of my best views, including a perfect one of Muz Tagh Ata, reflected in the waters of the Qara Kul, were spoilt by the plates freezing before they were properly dry. Snow fell almost every night, and unless one laced up the door of one's tent tightly before going to bed, there was apt to be a small snow-drift on one's pillow in the morning. Whenever we could, we occupied *aq-ois*, because of the fire which could be made in the middle if there was enough *burtsa* or *saxaul* brushwood. The latter is not a good fuel for open fires, but makes excellent hot-ashes for the "fire-bucket." If it is to be used for a fire, it is advisable to lay the plants with their stalks outwards and the bushy part towards the middle, as they burn better thus.

•487 The Ulugh Rabat Pass (13,650 feet), immediately to the west of Muz Tagh Ata, consists merely of rolling downs with a barely perceptible watershed. When we crossed it on 20th September it had a little snow on it—just enough to make me wish I had my skis with me and could wait for the next snowfall. Between November and April, when the snow lies everywhere, one could ski every yard of the 5 miles from the top of the pass to the Qarasu post, and most of the 12 miles on to Ghujak as well. The run down the north side of the pass would be shorter, but just as good.

Passing the flourishing settlement of Tagharma, chief centre of the Tajiks, we reached Tashqurghan the following day, and after a couple of days' halt went on to Yurghal Gumbaz on 24th September. On the latter march we spent the whole morning visiting Pir Imam Dad and our other 181 Maulai friends of 1922 at Tughlan Shahr. D. was struck by the almost Italian vivacity and warmth of feeling shown by the Tajik women, compared with the more phlegmatic and reserved Kirghiz. In my dealings with the men, too, I found them much more excitable than either the Kirghiz or the Turkis of the plains. At Nadir Beg's house D. was greeted enthusiastically by a vivacious, bright-eyed, alert little woman, who had entertained her for ten minutes at Mintaka Aghzi 181 on the journey up. [illegible]ady had then been living with her father, the Beg of Mintaka, but had since married into Nadir's family. She rushed at D., patted her all over and began re-arranging her hair, which had suffered from the gallop across the meadows from Tashqurghan. She also kissed her when leaving. A quite poor Tajik woman at Yurghal Gumbaz told D. that she had had nine children, of whom seven had died. One of her daughters had been very beautiful. " She died when she was still a bride," said the old lady. " She was very lovely, her eyes were full of fire.[1] She was so beautiful that I used to sit making clothes for her all day long."

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[1] "Geographical Journal," June 1925, pp. 406–8

The Tajiks use the word *chokan* for " bride," i.e. a wife 561 who has not yet borne a child, whereas the Turkis as already mentioned reserve the term for an unmarried girl. Similarly the word *jawan* is used for a woman who has borne children, not as at Kashgar. A Tajik married woman wears big mother-of-pearl buttons over her ears, and at intervals of about two inches down each *chach* or braid of hair. The appetite of the Tajiks for medicine is in no way inferior to that of the Kirghiz. A lad was sent with us all the way to Yurghal Gumbaz to fetch back from our camp doses of castor-oil and anteczema which D. had prescribed for a baby and an elderly widow respectively. D. gave most careful and explicit instructions to the messenger, but it is quite likely that they rubbed the widow with the castor-oil and administered the anteczema internally to the baby.

Three days later we reached Lopgaz at the northern foot of 487 the Mintaka Pass, 14,000 feet above the sea. It had been cold even at Paik, the stage before, and I had adjured the Beg who was looking after us, to be sure and provide good *aq-ois* and plenty of firewood. Imagine our disgust, therefore, when we arrived at the bleak and open Lopgaz camping-ground, just as the sun was dipping behind a snowy ridge, to find nothing but two miserable little huts, full of holes and smelling strongly, and not a scrap of firewood. The Beg was a long way behind with our loads, and there was nothing for it but to set to work and collect fuel for ourselves. All that was to be had in the valley was the tiniest growth of *burtsa* imaginable, plants the size of face-sponges and damp at that. After an hour we had collected a heap about two feet high, which

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[1] The Turki word for fire (*ut*) is also used for love.

487 we handed over to the cook, Murad Shah, when the caravan arrived. Eventually the Beg's men produced some better *burtsa* from far up the hill-side, and by nightfall we had enough for our own needs and those of our men. The *aq-ois* were impossible, but we had the tents pitched; D. sensibly went to bed in hers, and by nine o'clock we were dining snugly by her bedside off the usual three courses which Murad Shah never failed to turn out, however unpromising the circumstances. Ahmad Bakhsh even managed to provide a "fire-bucket" for D. next morning, for which she was very grateful, as there were six inches of snow on the ground at dawn and a blizzard was in progress. We struck camp and hurried up the last 1,700 feet of the ascent as quickly as we could, for fear lest the pass should be blocked; but it had cleared up by the time we reached the top and all was well, though the baggage-ponies had great difficulty in scrambling through the snow up the steep hill-face. The breakneck descent on the south side on to the moraine of the Mintaka glacier was very difficult, for the sun was strong, and the ponies slipped and staggered in the slush of the melting snow; we had to "nurse" them down very carefully, every one lending a hand. None the less we passed Gul Khwaja, where we had camped in 1922, and reached Murkushi before seven. After the fuel scarcity of the Pamirs—it is their chief drawback as a health-resort—the roaring bonfires we lit among the woods at Murkushi were a rare treat.

500 Next day (9th October) we reached Misgar. Here it was a curious sensation to receive and send telegrams over a counter once more and listen to the tap-tap of Morse. We had come back to the nineteenth century, if not quite yet to the twentieth. Our only *contretemps* was the engulfing of three of our ponies in the quicksands of the Kilik stream between Murkushi and Runhil; we fished them out, but several of our boxes were immersed, including one containing all my papers.

The six marches from Misgar to Ghalmit we covered in four days, finding the going very much better than in 1922. This was partly because there was more down-hill than up; partly because the Batura and Hussaini Glaciers were easier to cross owing to the lateness of the season; but mostly because the Mir of Hunza, with the assistance of a subsidy from the Kashmir State, had greatly improved the track. It was now scarcely anywhere less than two feet wide and reassuringly

N *175 to the Venetian merchant, Marco Polo.

487 S 175 487 During the centuries when China faced the land frontier of the Northwest and the Silk Road was the main channel of China's intercourse with the outside world, the target of China's imperialistic expansion, when strong, was the domination of the petty states of Central Asia. The principal strategic pass that must be held to prevent invading armies from pouring in and ravaging China, in periods of weakness and division, was Yü-men, the Jade Gate, in northwestern China.

S 17

B. Recurring Cycles of Nomadic Eruptions

As the advance and recession of Chinese power in Turkestan reflected the vigor and the decline of Chinese dynasties,(a feature of Chinese history discussed in the historical section of the General Handbook), so were the outbursts and withdrawals of the nomads the manifestations of their activity and passivity. The juxtaposition and interaction of the Chinese scheme of advance and withdrawal with the nomadic scheme shaped the dynamics and course
S of history of Northwest China. Together with Inner Mongolia,
(131) Sinkiang forms a broad semicircular belt, which marks the marginal zone between China and the steppes and is the amphitheater for the vast age-long struggle between the sedentary and nomadic peoples.

N

1. Earliest invasions

*175 648 S 175 648 The alternate thrust of the nomads into this marginal zone, at times even penetrating into the heartland of China, and their retraction into the steppes, have been a recurring phenomenon in the history of Central Asia. With tidal regularity, the nomads have surged forth when China was weak and divided, only to ebb when China was strong and united. As far back as the eighth century B.C., when China was beginning to disintegrate into warring states, there were invasions of China by the north and northwestern peoples called Ti and Jung. In Central Asia there was the expansion of the Scythians. From the third to the first century B.C., the confederacy of nomads led by the Hsiung-nu or Huns were active in China's Northwest. During this same period Central Asia was overrun first by the Greeks of Alexander's army, then by the Yüeh-chih and, further east, by the Sakas and Wu-sun. The defense measures of the Ch'in dynasty and the military advance of the Chinese during the Han dynasty in the first century B.C. and the first century A.D., held the Huns in check and finally succeeded in splitting up the Hun confederation.

2. Turkic incursions

From the fourth to the seventh centuries, with China weak and divided, the border peoples from China's northern and northwestern frontiers breached China's defenses. First in dribbles and then in raging torrents they occupied the northwest and poured

133 sea-level, and it joins the Burchun plain on the east. The E-min River originates from this group.

The Dzungarian Basin: Dzungaria was the name derived from a Mongolian tribe who lived in this area for a long time. The basin covers the area from the fringes of the Burkan Plateau and the Burchun Plain at the north, the Ili Plain at the west, and the Cheng-hsi Basin to the south, along the piedmont of the Tien-shan. The basin is triangular in shape. The Altai runs from northwest to southeast, so that the east side of the basin is relatively higher than the west side. The surface elevation of the eastern part of the basin is around 1,500 feet, whereas, on the western part, it is only 600 feet in height. All the rivers run from east to west.

The Tien-shan Region: As the Tien-shan range runs from west to east, it separates the province into two sections - southern Sinkiang and northern Sinkiang. The range has been structured by numerous fault blocks; there are many horsts and grabens along both sides of the mountains. Moreover, they vary considerably in height and width and everywhere constitute a strongly marked dividing line between the great basin and the regions to the north. These comprise the wide plateaus of Dzungaria, stretching north to the fringe of the basin with a few well-irrigated, but isolated, areas and fertile plains and valleys. They do not, however, form any regular system and pattern. Since there is adequate moisture, [241] agriculture is to be found both in the valleys and on the plains, especially in the Ili Valley and on the Fou-kang Plain. Farther north on the northern slope of the ranges, grazing land is found. It has, at all times, attracted waves of nomadic nations, from the Huns to the Kazakhs and the Mongols. The continuity of its rampart, the Tien-shan range, offers opportunities to [487] nomadic neighbors on the north for plundering the oases and and trade routes in the south, since the mountain rampart is pierced at intervals by passes which are passable for mounted men and transport during a considerable portion of the year. To the southwest of the Turfan depression the wide valley of Karashahr descends from the grazing plateaus of Yulduz. It always has served as an open gate for nomadic inroads in the northwestern corner of the Tarim Basin. Farther to the west, under corresponding conditions, the great oases of Kucha and Kashgar are equally liable to attack across the Tienshan. The Tien-shan Region is the most important division in the province, because it occupies almost one-fourth of the provincial territory and there are many major cities and oases located on both sides of the ranges.

The Tarim Basin: This is the huge desert area between the

N 121 *563 Han Chinese have taken up farming. Many of them have also become small business men dealing in camels, sheep, oxen, furs, skins, et cetera. Often those who have settled in cities are restaurant owners. The Moslems are faithful followers of their religion. Although they have taken on the Chinese way of life, the people have always kept their own identity.

S 101 • 487 In early times Sinkiang was referred to as Hsi-yü (the Western Region) or as T'ien-shan nan-lu and T'ien-shan pei-lu (Road South of the Heavenly Mountains and Road North of the Heavenly Mountains). These names referred to the natural caravan highways which progress westward from Chinese Kansu on either side of the Heavenly Mountains, weaving along and through the watered and cultivated areas.

S 563 The region has the most colorful mixture of race, custom and habit in existence. There are the dark-bearded Uighurs from Kashgar, in long, bright-colored coats, with their veiled and white-clothed women; there are booted Kirgiz from Taghdumbash Pamir; there are the outcast unveiled women from Maralbashi and foreigners from Afghanistan, India, Tibet and Russian Turkestan.

S 178 563 Here the passage of time seems to bring little change. Mixed as they are, the tribesmen of the steppes cling to their time-honored ways, each race maintaining its own traditions. Religion runs the gamut from Mohammedanism and Lamaist Buddhism to Christianity. It is a land of mosques and lamaseries, of centuries-old irrigation ditches, of "Turban Heads" and Chinese Moslems. It is an open land of lean Kalmuch nomads and hard Kirgiz frontiersmen, of Kazakh cowboys galloping across the steppe.

N S 121 *563 Of all these peoples in the Northwest, we have selected for our study seven groups, namely: the Han Chinese, the Chinese Moslems, the Kirghizs, the Kazakhs, the new Uighurs or Eastern Turks, the Mongours, the Tibetans and the Western Mongols. The Mongols of Alashan and Edsingol are now part of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region. Their value system and life patterns do not differ appreciably from those of the Mongols in Inner Mongolia. Reference is therefore made to the same section in the IMAR Handbook.

III. Social Values and Patterns of Living of the Peoples in the Northwest

N *563 *175 [463]

A. The Han Chinese

The Han Chinese of the Northwest region are predominantly farmers, artisans and merchants. During China's era of Imperial government, and during the Nationalist period as well, the region and its borders have often been involved in war with the

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FOREIGN RELATIONS

I. Strategic Importance of Sinkiang

175 Sinkiang has been one of the most strategic areas of China in
648 imperial and modern times. Ever since the area first came under
Chinese control during the Han period (206 B.C. - 220 A.D.), it
439 has been for China a key position for the control of central Asia.
● [487] The two caravan routes to the north and south of the Tien-shan
range linked China with the steppes of western Turkestan and with Europe and the Near East. The control of the oasis cities along these caravan routes gave China not only a dominant position in the trade, but also a check over the states of central Asia that profited from this trade. In the times of the empire the Chinese control over tribal groups in central Asia was strongest when the corridor of trade was safely in Chinese hands.

175 Full Chinese control over Eastern Turkestan was maintained,
however, only over limited periods in imperial history. In the
648 period of division and chaos that followed the Han period, Turkestan was lost to China and became a contested area between rival tribal states. Chinese control was reasserted in T'ang times by a Chinese dynasty which itself was partly of Central Asian origin. The area was included in the Mongol empire when the Mongols established their rule over China. Lost again under the Ming dynasty, Chinese Turkestan was finally reconquered by the Manchus in the eighteenth century and has been recognized as a part of China since the time when the modern West came in contact with the Chinese world.

The strategic role of Chinese Turkestan has become somewhat modified in modern times. When Czarist Russia expanded her frontiers across the Asiatic continent towards the Chinese border, the Inner Asiatic frontiers of China were threatened by a new type of attack by a modern Western state. The Russian expansion across Asia found its counterpart in the British conquest of India. From that time on the British regarded the high plateaus of Asia as potential basis for an attack on India through the mountain passes of the northwest. Chinese Turkestan became an area of conflicting British-Russian policies, and at the same time an anchor of the whole Chinese defense of Central Asia against Russian and British invasion.

Of the two powers, Russia was by far the more dangerous to Chinese control. Through her move into Asia, Russia became China's neighbor along a frontier of 3,000 miles. Her pressure was exerted in Manchuria and Mongolia as well as in Turkestan. The British-Indian border with China was shorter and the high mountain passes of the Himalayas and the Karakorum provided a

000 oases. A trade road, looping around the desert, links the oases
133 like beads on a string, forming a U with the open end toward the
491 east.

131 Dsungaria is in northern Sinkiang, between the Tienshan and
the Altai mountains which mark the frontier between Sinkiang and
132 Western Mongolia. Precipitation here is slightly higher, and
137 steppe vegetation makes pastoralism possible. Northern Dsungaria
233 was the avenue of migration followed by the Mongols in their west-
[487] ward conquests.

2. Pastoral nomadism

233 In 1943, there were 11,720,000 sheep and goats in Sinkiang, 1,550,000 cattle, 870,000 horses, and 90,000 camels, totalling 14,230,000. In 1947 the province reported 12,266,000 sheep and goats, 1,659,000 cattle, 1,027,000 horses, and 85,000 camels, a total of 15,037,000. The total has remained somewhat constant over a period of time, probably due to the fact that pasture land is poor and care of the herds inadequate. Most of the livestock are in Dsungaria, pastured in the steppe land by nomad Kazakhs or Mongols. There are many variations to the techniques of herding animals since cattle, horses, and camels each prosper best on different kinds of pasture. The problem is to devise the best combinations of animals to be maintained and to select the appropriate pasture, decide how long to remain on a pasture, when to move, and how.

3. Oasis agriculture

241 There are two kinds of oases in Sinkiang: those in the south,
312 which are sharply isolated from each other by desert stretches
and the oases of the north, which have fringes of land in which rainfall farming prevails. When irrigation was introduced, it seems to have been practiced first on the lower courses of the rivers, where the soil was soft and the engineering problems required only the digging of simple ditches from the banks of the streams. In the course of time, as knowledge of engineering developed, the tendency was for the oasis to move upstream toward the boulder slopes at the edge of the foothills, but not back into the gorges where the problems were far too great.

Oasis engineering is extremely simple. The basic pattern is a main canal from the river, branching into smaller canals which branch in turn into ditches which deliver water to the fields, all arranged so that water flows by gravity from level to level, without the pumping or bailing devices which are widely used in China and in Soviet Turkestan to lift water from lower to higher levels.

[133] In volume of discharge, the rivers of the Tarim system are far behind the two great rivers of Soviet Inner Asia, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya. The total discharge of all streams in Sinkiang is about 3400 cubic meters per second, of which about seventy per cent is in the Tarim Basin. In irrigation engineering

N 439 435 *175 than that of Kansu. **The details are shown in the following table:**

Table IV: **The Exports and Imports of Ninghsia, 1933**

Description	Value (yüan)	
A. Exports:		4,040,000
opium	2,400,000	
sheep's pelts	900,000	
medical herbs	450,000	
wool	240,000	
hair-like weeds	50,000	
B. Imports		2,270,000
cotton piece goods	1,400,000	
silk, woolen cloth, cosmetics	300,000	
sundries	120,000	
cotton	150,000	
grain	300,000	
Grand Total		6,310,000

Source: Shina Shōbetsū Zenshi, 1943 ed., Vol. 7, pp. 638-39.

N D. Chinghai
366 Trade in Chinghai is centered around Hsi-ning, the provincial
635 capital. Aside from the two routes which connect Hsi-ning and
N 487 Lanchou, there is another route leading to Tibet and still another
N to Sinkiang. The main exports were fur, hide, grain, salt,
439 lumber and medical herbs, among which fur and hide, the staples,
are mostly shipped to Tientsin for re-export. The main imports are cotton piece goods and silk. Trade statistics are not available. It is also known that there was considerable trade between Chinghai and India, but details are lacking.

S E. Sinkiang
439 Trade in Sinkiang is a little more complicated, because Sinkiang trades not only with agricultural China, but also with
S Soviet Russia, India and Afghanistan. So far as the trade with
439 agricultural China is concerned, there are three main trade
• 487 routes. One runs from Urumchi to Tientsin via Kobdo, Urga and
491 Pao-t'ou, generally known as the Outer Mongolia Great Grass
Route. Another runs from Urumchi to Tientsin via Qomul (Hami), Darkhan League, Kuei-sui and Pao-t'ou, generally known as the Inner Mongolia Lesser Grass Route. And still another is the historical Great Northwest Highway which leads to Sian via Qomul (Hami) and Lanchou. The Outer Mongolian route had been out of use since the independence of Outer Mongolia. The Inner
S Mongolia route was originally a caravan route. But since 1933,
439 the section between Urumchi and Kuei-sui has been open to
491 motor traffic under the name of Sinkiang-Suiyuan highway.

439 [487] It is understood that there was also considerable trade between Sinkiang, Lanchou and Sian, which, in fact, was the main trade route, but detailed information is not available.

According to a Japanese estimate, the Chinese goods were distributed to the various cities in Sinkiang in the following proportions, which also show the relative commercial importance of the different cities or areas:

Table VI: Distribution of Chinese Goods among Cities in Sinkiang

Place	Percentages of Goods Distributed
Urumchi (Tihua)	25.0
Ili (Huei-yüan)	20.0
South Sinkiang	18.0
Ta-ch'eng (Chuguchak)	15.0
Ku-ch'eng-tzu (Chitai)	12.0
Sharasüme (Cheng-hua)	4.0
Hami (Qomul)	3.0
Khobdo (Jirgalantu)	3.0
Total	100.0

Source: Shina Shōbetsū Zenshi, Vol. 8, pp. 534-35.

439 435 175 As to the direct foreign trade, the main country is Soviet Russia. According to official Soviet reports, the value of the Soviet-Sinkiang trade is as follows:

Table VII: Value of Soviet-Sinkiang Trade (unit: 1,000 rubles)

Year	Imports	Exports	Total
1931	13,954	10,212	24,166
1932	15,698	12,305	28,003
1933	10,826	18,822	29,648
1934	4,730	5,945	10,675
1935	6,049	4,550	10,599
1936	36,145	25,671	61,816

Source: Shina Shōbetsū Zenshi, 1943 ed., Vol. 8, p. 514.

439 175 The main exports of Sinkiang to Russia were grain, fruits, wool, fur, meat, paper, cotton, silk, animal intestines and cattle; and the main imports of Sinkiang from Russia were textiles, sugar, metals and metal manufactures, glass and chinaware, oil and matches. The exports of Sinkiang constituted 1.01 per cent of the value of goods that Russia imported from East Asia in 1931, and 1.77 per cent of that in 1932. The imports of

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it was opened for traffic in the autumn of 1945. This 165 kilometer railway ran from Paoki following a stretch of the Wei River to T'ien-shui in Kansu. This Paoki-Tien-shui area was regarded as a place of great strategic importance during the war.

Excluding the Hsien-yang-Tung-ch'uan branch of 138 kilometers, total mileage of the Lunghai Railway, before 1949, was about 1,380 kilometers of which the section from Tung-kuan to T'ien-shui running in the Northwest Region was roughly 600 kilometers in length.

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B. Highways

Highway construction in Northwest China had been well-developed up to the war. The main lines may be listed as follows:

	kms.
1. Highways in Shensi:	
Sian-Chang-wu section (of Sian-Lanchow Highway)	210
Sian-Tungkuan	145
Sian-Paoki-Ning-chiang section (of Szechwan-Shensi Highway)	500
Sian-Mei-hsien	145
Wei-nan-Ta-li-Han-cheng	180
2. Highways in Kansu:	
Lanchou-Ping-liang-Chang-wu section (of Sian-Lanchou Highway)	550
Lanchou-Yumen-Hsin-hsin-chia section (of Kansu-Sinkiang Highway)	1,400
Lanchou-Hsiang-tang section (of Kansu-Chinghai Highway)	120
Lanchou-Min-hsien section	350
Hua-chia-ling-T'ien-shui	210
Ping-liang-Kuyüan-Tung-hsin (in Ninghsia)	220
3. Highways in Ninghsia (now part of Kansu):	
Ninghsia (Yin-ch'uan)-Tung-hsin	210
Ninghsia-Shan-pa (in Inner Mongolia)	325
Ninghsia-Ho-chia-chi (toward Lanchou)	240
4. Highways in Chinghai:	
Hsining-Hsiang-tang section	110
Hsining-Kuei-teh	108
Hsining-Lin-hsia (in Kansu)	190
Hsining-Tu-lan (toward Tun-huang)	428
Hsining-Ta-ho-pa (toward Yu-shu)	327
5. Highways in Sinkiang:	
Urumchi-Hami-Hsin-hsin-chia	835
Urumchi-Wusu-Ili (toward Russia)	691

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(Wang, Chin-fu. Hsi-pei ti ti-wen yü jen-wen Huang, Fen-sheng. 127-29; Pien-chiang tun-ken-yüan 126-28.)

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It is interesting to note that part of the highways in Kansu and all those in Sinkiang were built on the old trade routes. Highways in this region were centered at Sian, Lanchow, Ninghsia (Yin-chuan), Hsining and Urumchi.

N 491 [487] Hsining and Urumchi. It should not be overlooked, however, that caravan routes (or dirt roads) were still the main auxiliaries to highway and railway transportation.

In the construction of highways in wartime, emphasis had been laid on building, renovating, and maintaining international lines in order to link the interior provinces with foreign countries. A good example in the Northwest was the 2,674 kilometer highway from Lanchow via Hsin-hsin-chia and Urumchi to Hocheng on the Sino-Soviet border. In addition, the following are among the more important highways built in this region during the war:

1. Han-chung-Pai-ho Highway: This 533-kilometer highway was an important motor-road link between southern Shensi and northern Hupei.
2. T'ien-shui-Shuang-shih-pu Highway: This line of 231 kilometers, from T'ien-shui in southeastern Kansu to Shuang-shih-pu in southwestern Shensi, formed junctions with the Sian-Lanchow and Szechwan-Shensi Highways.
3. A line of 1334 kilometers, linking Ansi in Kansu and Kurle in Sinkiang via Tun-huang, was planned in 1942. N *[175] Between November, 1942, and 1943 the 479 kilometer section from Kurle to Nochiang was completed. Further construction plans were suspended.

N 491 485 *[175] To cope with the rapidly growing transportation demands, the Nationalist Government had constructed, in 1946, seventy-nine New Life Movement Service Stations along the 2,200 kilometer highway from Kuang-yüan in Szechwan to Chiu-chuan in Kansu, in order to facilitate the movement of migrants from the interior provinces to the frontier area. This kind of station was divided into four classes: the special first class which furnished room and board, medical and postal services and caravan equipment; the special second class, without medical and postal services; general first and general second classes offered much less service. This service was designed to provide travellers with a feeling of security and hence aid the government in its policy of a movement to the Northwest.

N 487 C. Inland Waterway Navigation:

Rivers in the Northwest were not very serviceable. The upper stretch of the Yellow River from Chung-wei to Pao-t'ou in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region was navigable, especially for a distance of about 100 kilometers around Shih-tsuei-shan, where a steamer line was opened for traffic. N 487 501 The passages from Lanchou northward to Chung-wei and westward to Hsining were navigable only with ox-hide or sheepskin rafts. In Shensi province, both the Wei and Han Rivers were navigable with boats (not steamers) starting from Hsing-ping and Mien-hsien respectively. S • 487 501 In Sinkiang, on the upper stretch of the Tarim River, native boats and wooden rafts were used while the Irtych River, starting at

S 487 501 [505] Cheng-hua via Burchun crossing the Soviet border to Ozero Zaisan, was navigable from April to November. It is reported that steamers under 500 tons were able to sail along its lower course.

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D. Civil Aviation

Civil airlines were initiated in 1924, the first route running from Sian via Lanchow, Hami to Urumchi. A north branch line was created from Lanchow via Yin-chuan (Ninghsia) to Pao-t'ou with a south branch line from Sian via Han-chung and Chengtu to Chungking. After 1932, a new line was inaugurated from Shanghai via Nanking and Lanchou to Urumchi. In 1935, an aviation station was established at Tah-cheng on the Sinkiang border in accord with the Sino-Soviet civil air aviation agreement to improve postal service between the two countries. However, some of the air lines were changed during the war. The Chungking-Han-chung-Paoki line of 530 kilometers was inaugurated in January, 1945, thus eliminating Sian as a regular port of call. The 1995 kilometer Chungking-Lanchow-Chiu-chuan-Hami line resumed its run in March, 1945, by extending the original Chungking-Lanchou line to Hami by way of Chiu-chuan. (The Sian-Lanchou -Urumchi line was no longer a regular line during the war.) Thus within Free China, regular air lines were focussed at Chungking. In addition, planes might be chartered, if necessary, for places like Sian, T'ien-shui, Hsining and Ninghsia which were not stops of the regular lines. Ma Hung-k'uei, the governor of Ninghsia, in order to maintain the seclusion of his province, obstructed regular calls at Ninghsia.

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III. Communication Development under the Communist Regime

A. Railway Building and Planning

1. T'ien-shui-Lanchou Railway: This 346 kilometer section was the extension of the Lunghai Railway which had already been in existence prior to 1949 from Lien-yün via Cheng-chou, Loyang, Sian and Paoki to T'ien-shui. Construction on the T'ien-shui-Lanchou line was begun in 1950 and completed in October, 1952. It links the Lunghai with the Lanchou-Sinkiang Railway. However, according to a Nationalist report, twenty-seven per cent of the construction work on this section had been done during 1947. Another source indicated that in August, 1947, the T'ien-shui-Lanchou section was under construction. (von Lochow, H.J., China's National Railways, p. 77.)

2. Lanchou-Sinkiang Railway: The Communist laid great stress on the project of running a line westward from Lanchou via Yü-men and Hami to Urumchi in Sinkiang for a distance of about 2800 kilometers. Construction was initiated at Lanchou on

1: Washington S-4 (no date) 1956 AF13 Northwest China AF13
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HISTORICAL SETTING

N 631

I. General History of Relations with China

Northwest China, once a major administrative region of Communist China, is an arbitrary political union of widely dissimilar
N 635 [162] geographical areas inhabited by a conglomeration of diverse ethnic
groups. At the eastern end of this vast wedge-shaped region is
Shensi, which has been an integral part of China Proper throughout history and is inhabited almost exclusively by Chinese. Although it is only one-seventeenth of the total area, this single
N province holds almost half of the population of the Northwest.
[633] [177] [668] Sian, the provincial seat of Shensi, has been in centuries past and
still is today China's political and military base for the control of
the Northwest and has been the center for the diffusion of Chinese
culture to the Northwest in the past and of Communist ideology in the present.

S 635 [131] [61] [563] At the western end of the Northwest region of China is the province of Sinkiang or Chinese Turkestan. Its territory occupies half the area of the Northwest but its population is only a seventh of the total. Three-quarters of the inhabitants are Uighurs, a people Turkic in speech and Moslem in religion. The rest is divided among thirteen nationalities.

N 635 In the north is the now abolished province of Ninghsia, inhabited largely by Mongols. In the south is Chinghai (also known as Kokonor) with a heterogeneous population of Mongols, Chinese and Tibetans. The Gobi Desert, which pushes south to Ninghsia, and the highlands of Chinghai constricts the habitable area into an hourglass shape, forming a corridor connecting Shensi in the east and Sinkiang in the west. This is the province of Kansu.

N +175 487 S 175 • 487

A. The Role of the Kansu Panhandle

All traffic between China Proper and Turkestan has been funnelled through the narrow confines of this corridor. The ~~ancient~~ Silk Road started from its terminus at Sian (known in the past as Ch'ang-an) and wound its way, via the Kansu Corridor, into Chinese Turkestan where it branched into the northern and southern routes to bypass the towering Tienshan Mountains. The conquering armies of Han, T'ang and Ch'ing had marched out through this narrow passageway to assert the political rule of China over the desert wastes and oasis towns of Turkestan. Hordes of nomads, lured by the lush plains and opulent cities of China, have poured through this funnel to raid and pillage and, when successful, to found militaristic kingdoms. This was the route worn deep by the trudging feet of camel caravans bearing the tea and silk and porcelain of China to bazaars in the Near East and even to the markets of Byzantium and Rome. In the train of these caravans travellers have come into China, from the Buddhist missionary, Kumarajiva,

175 hand, Islamism, which had been temporarily repulsed
779 by the Mongols, again closed in, so that Turkestan
797 became one of the strongholds of the Moslem faith.

The trend of political events during the last few
186 years has resulted in movements no less epoch-making
than were the invasions of the Mongols and the Huns.
A wave of race-consciousness and of national enthusiasm
has swept over the peoples of Central Asia and caused
them to hearken to any voice which has promised to
secure them the liberty and self-determination they so
much covet. 'The East is undergoing a concentrated
process of adaptation which, with us, was spread over
centuries, and the result is not so much *evolution* as
revolution.'

600 The situation is pregnant with spiritual possibilities, for the old and the new are struggling fiercely, and that struggle will result in anarchy and lawlessness, unless the hearts of men be captured and re-created by the Christ Who alone makes men free.

797 The Church Militant is represented in the territory stretching from Suchow to Siberia by *one* Mission Station occupied by *two* men.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

TRAVELLING IN THE 'GREAT HEAT'

132 THE trying season known to the Chinese as Ta Shu—
'Great Heat'—was upon us. Hami was indeed hot,
and Mr. Hunter warned us that not until we reached the
other side of the Tian Shan could we hope for any
487 alleviation. From Hami two main trade-routes, known
as the Nan Lu—'South Road'—and Peh Lu—'North
Road'—run in the respective directions their names

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

indicate. The former lies across Chinese Turkestan to 487 ●
the south of the Tian Shan Range, passing by Kuche
and Aksu to Kashgar ; the latter, cutting through the
Tian Shan Range, runs along its northern side, through
Urumchi to the Ili Valley and Kulja. It was this
latter route that we followed.

Our cart was returned by the wheelwright fitted with 484
splendid new wheels, the mules were rested, and all promised 312
well for the next lap of the trail. A Chinese traveller's
proverb speaks of the long journey from Suchow 133
to Hami as 'unmitigated bitterness,' and of that which
still lay before us as a medium between the 'bitter and
the sweet.' Certain it was that we had reached the
end of most of the brackish water oases, and we found
that the plain which now lay before us was, in most
places, duly supplied with springs and wells of sweet
water. The three halts beyond Hami are known as
'the First, Second, and Third Stops,' and the traveller
is expected to do the three stages at a pull. However,
after eleven hours we only reached the second halt, and
refused to go further. The first night-stage on leaving
a resting-place was always particularly trying, coming
as it did after a busy day of final preparations and farewell
calls. There was no possibility of rest by day or
by night, and at the end of twenty-four hours we were
always dead beat.

'Second Halt' was an attractive place, watered by a 361
rushing stream. The village was much larger than 312
those south of Hami, and there were apple trees laden
with nearly ripe fruit hanging over the walls of the 245
farms. After some hours of sleep, we got up to find the
courtyard invaded by a band of men travelling from 484
their homes in Shansi to their business in Kucheng.
They were all employees of a large firm, and by the 577
terms of their agreement were allowed to visit Shansi

491 of which was full of tamarisk mounds. Many of these
stood twenty feet high, and here, as everywhere in the
137 desert, each plant was raised on a mound accumulated
round its roots, this being the soil blown by the wind
from some more fertile region. Among the tamarisks
were plants of Saksaul (*Anabasis Ammodendron*), whose
contorted stems, grey cracked bark, green plumes of
small greyish leaves, and pink fruit differentiated them
from the more feathery species. It has been computed
that these tamarisk hills may be from 500 to 1000
years old. The trunks of a forest of dead poplars stood
beyond, and added a final touch to the desolation of
the scene.

361 Tsikioking—'The Seven Cornered Well'—stands in
the sandy basin, and is now a place of some importance,
[205] boasting a small Government Official who also controls
● [487] the post-office. It is here that the roads divide which
lead from Hami to Turfan, and Hami to Kucheng. We
[206] were following the latter, but the telegraph wire went
via Turfan to Urumchi. Great as was our desire to see
Turfan—a most interesting locality—we realised that it
was scarcely safe to enter such a hot area at midsummer.
[132] We were warned that at this season people were dying
from heat, and that the inhabitants protected themselves
[342] by spending the hours from sunrise to sunset in
underground cave dwellings. The Turfan depression
descends to two hundred feet below sea-level, and
presents conditions most favourable to agriculture but
almost insupportable to man. Tsikioking is better
312 supplied with fuel than any of the surrounding oases,
and in winter its population is increased by families
who move here for those months. The best fuel known
in the desert is the root of the tamarisk. It is of dark
hard wood which, chopped into small pieces and sundried
looks like coal, and has a great deal of its burning

133 slope met some rough descents over granite slabs. As
we gradually came in view of the northern slopes of the
491 Tian Shan we found the barren, stony face, typical of
the south side of this range, exchanged for wooded
slopes, while the sandy wastes gave way to short,
grassy turf and scrub.

361 Tashitow, though small, is a place of some importance.
Geographically its position is notable, standing as it
● 487 does on the Dzungarian slopes of the great watershed.
From here also is a foot-track to Barkul, and a short cut
over the mountains to Turfan, whilst yet another road
leads in fifteen days to Uliassutai. It boasts three inns,
and a temple with a lake and spring of water, which
though sweet was very turbid. The temple is built
against a bare rock of a shining black formation, as
though it had been polished with blacklead. We
491 followed a good road from Tashitow past Sankochüan—
'Three Springs'—to Muleiho—'Stacked Wood Stream.'
It was midnight on Friday when we reached this town,
361 where we were to spend Sunday. We passed down a
long street between closed shops, under the frontage of
which lay sleeping merchants, doubtless unable to
endure the heat of the rooms. Mr. Hunter was ahead
of us, and Nimga was waiting to direct us to our inn,
which was the only one where rooms were available.
He carried in his hand a great bunch of the small,
seedless grapes from Turfan—a welcome sight, for we
485 had tasted no fruit since Hami. The inn court, as well
as the street, was full of sleeping men, and the landlord's
welcome was far from encouraging: 'There are rooms
all right,' he said, 'but no one attempts to sleep in them
at this season.' Then, turning to our servant, he
uttered the one word: 'Bugs'!

There was no alternative, so we spread a macintosh
sheet on the *kang* and then lay down, leaving the candle

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
Sinkiang AI 1

366 tables were finer even than those of Hami. One street
was given up to the furriers, who worked in rather
443 showy but inferior skins, the best quality not finding
its way to Kucheng. Another street held the silversmiths,
463 while here and there a photographer or watchmaker
advertised himself as being the branch shop of a
Peking firm. The whole business quarter was gay and
prosperous, but the Turki shops were fewer in number
and inferior to the Chinese. The importance of Kucheng
487 lies in the fact that it is situated at the terminus of the
361 great desert trade-route to Peking, which passes by the
439 Yellow River to Paotowchen and Kweihwating. These
two important marts of North Shansi are 1500 miles
from Kucheng, and the camel caravans habitually
travel to and fro carrying the highly-prized bazaar
wares over the desert. In normal times the camels are
always on the move, though they may take from
three to six months to accomplish the journey, but
at the time of our visit this route was closed owing
to the activity of the War Lords. We were told that
whereas before 1914 the British and German goods were
the most highly valued on the market, at the present
time Russian and Japanese wares had superseded them.
It was interesting to find, however, that the Moslem
woman's veil which we desired to buy bore a stamp in
the corner: 'Made in Manchester.' We stayed in a
Mohammedan inn, where we had the immediate *entrée*
to the women's quarters, in which our landlord's
wives lived in seclusion. The family was very strict
177 in its observance of Islamic rites, and five times a day
the prayer-hour was observed. Every morning before
sunrise and at evening twilight a long and elaborate
liturgy was recited by the head of the house. The
purifications which preceded the prayer entailed a
washing of face, hands, arms and feet in running water.

3:Cable & French M-5 (1926) 1927 AF13 Northwest China
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CHAPTER XLI

THE CAPITAL OF SINKIANG

175 URUMCHI first comes into historical prominence under the name of 'Bishbalik,' the capital of the kingdom established by the Uigurs in southern Dzungaria. Driven out from their first home in the northern part of this province, they wandered south until they found a resting place on the slopes of the Celestial Mountains, and also in the watered land as far as Hami, which territory they transformed so as to make of it the fertile district which it is to-day. The middle of the eighteenth century marks the period, when under the great Emperor Chien Lung, Chinese ascendency finally asserted itself in Dzungaria.

● 487 Urumchi is situated at the junction of four great
175 trade routes. One crossing Mongolia, another leading
through Hami to Kansu, a third connecting it with
361 Ili and Russia, and a fourth with Kashgar. It thus
occupied a position obviously suited to make it the
capital of the New Dominion, called by the Chinese
'Sinkiang.' The city has been the battle-ground of
many contending forces, having been taken and retaken
by Mongols, Chinese and Mohammedans, while during
the great Mohammedan rebellion in 1865 it is estimated
that 130,000 Chinese were murdered in the vicinity.
The word 'Urumchi' is of Mongolian origin; to the
Chinese the town is known as 'Tihwa,' but colloquially
it is referred to as 'Hungmiaotz'—'The Red Temple.'
[312] It is well supplied with water, and with coal of various
qualities, and is in easy communication with Manas,
[438] from which it draws grain, especially rice; with
439 Turfan which helps to supply it with fruit, and with

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during which we travelled. Earlier in the summer the 484
Manas and other rivers constitute a real peril. The
cold in Turkestan and Southern Siberia in early winter
increases the hardship of the way, and when the spring
thaw sets in, the roads around Urumchi are sometimes
impassable for weeks, owing to mud-pits which are so
extensive that no cart can negotiate them.

CHAPTER XLIII

ARRIVAL AT CHUGUCHAK

On September 2nd we sighted Hsihu. It is an [487]
important town surrounded by a considerable area of 443
irrigated land, where was the junction of the Ili and
Chuguchak main roads. The place presented the usual 366
aspect of a central point used by farmers as a market.
The streets were very countrified; nevertheless large
sums of money pass from hand to hand between the
grain merchants and their customers. There were the
usual bazaars, fruit and vegetable vendors, and general
shops where travellers might buy a pail, basin, towel,
soap, or cigarettes, while herbalists showed a dusty
store of rhubarb, cardamoms, liquorice, fennel, cloves,
and ginger. The inns were crowded with caravans [485]
travelling to Ili, or arriving from Siberia. Knowing
that even by tarantass we should not reach Chuguchak
for another ten days, and that on leaving this fertile
land we should pass through a barren country providing
neither fruit nor vegetables, we loaded up once more
with cucumbers, melons, and grapes, and late in the
evening a vine-grower appeared carrying a basket of
splendid fruit freshly cut, on which we all feasted for
several days. A long stage of sixty miles, the latter 133
part of which was over a sandy waste between tamarisk 491

361 This town is Known to Russians as Chuguchak, to
Chinese as Tacheng, but colloquially it is always called
136 Behya—' The Town of Seagulls '—because these birds,
following the course of the Irtish River all the way from
Arctic regions, collect here at certain seasons of the year.
We had in fact already seen them in the Gobi further
south, but could scarcely credit them to be really
seagulls until we learnt that it is their habit to follow
[487] the great rivers as far as their sources. Geographically
and politically the position of Tacheng is an important
one, forming as it does the one outlet towards Siberia
361 for all Turkestan. It is a populous, busy city, with
important Chinese and Russian quarters. There is a
[648] Russian Consul in residence, part of whose duties
consists in the issuing of temporary passports to drivers
and carters passing to and fro over the border. There
[205] are postal and telegraph offices and a military station.
[206] The postmaster, Mr. Chang, was very helpful and
[712] friendly. He knew something of foreigners' tastes,
being a Hankow man, and suggested that ' the ladies
might enjoy a drive round the city,' and he therefore
000 sent his Russian carriage and driver to show us the
sights. Having completed the *Grand Tour* this man
then asked us if we would like to see some more.
' Certainly,' we said, ' show us all there is worth seeing,'
whereupon, with a grin, he whipped up his horse, and
starting off at a good pace took us exactly over the
same ground as before! The smart carriage, with
strangers seated in it, attracted some attention on its
first round, but when we appeared the second time the
shopkeepers themselves came to their doors, exclaiming,
' Here they come again ! ' while one, making a movement
with his hand, indicated that we were on a perpetual
circular tour. To ' save face ' we therefore drew up
before some of the shops, and enquired the price of many
of the goods, though we had not the slightest intention

of adding to our baggage. The same evening Mr. and 600
Mrs. Chang entertained us to a delicious Chinese feast, and showed us all manner of kindness and hospitality, but some months afterwards we learnt that an armed madman running amok in Chuguchak severely wounded the postmaster, while his wife was shot dead.

The next stage of the journey was likewise to be 487●
taken in a hired tarantass, and we now required two carriages, as Mr. Mather's riding horse was returning with Mr. Hunter to Urumchi. Two routes were available, and travellers in Kansu had repeatedly told us we should find a motor connecting Chuguchak and Semipalatinsk, but when we enquired about the possibility of such a conveyance the answer was a smile, the motor not having been that way for years! Our Nogai friend was proceeding directly north to Semipalatinsk, an eleven days' road journey, where he would take the train for Novo Sibirsk, the new capital of Siberia, and thence to Moscow. But we preferred the shorter road journey, which turning directly eastward, brought us through the Tarbagatai and the Sair Mountains, to the frontier station at Kuswun, as from here by the land of the Qazaqs, we should reach Topliefmus, on Lake
Zaisan. At this place a river boat was said to call once 650
or twice a week, and to be still running, although the season was getting late. We hoped to be able to continue the journey by boat to Omsk, but over this little-known route we could be certain of nothing until we had tested it.

At last the carts were hired, the passports viséd, provisions bought, and our only regret in leaving Chuguchak was that here we must now all say goodbye to Mr. Hunter, who was returning, with Nimga, to Urumchi.

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WAKHAN: OR HOW TO VARY A ROUTE

By MAJOR H. W. TILMAN, D.S.O., M.C.

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It is a good many years since an Englishman crossed the Wakhjir Pass to follow the ancient route down the Oxus, so perhaps a brief note may be of interest. (Not that the lapse of time has effected many changes in Wakhan.) But before reaching Wakhan I should explain how I got there and in what circumstances.

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No traveller willingly follows a well-known route if there is a less known, so when returning last year from Kashgar to Gilgit I tried some slight variations. Between Kashgar and Tashkhurgan there is a choice of several routes, but all of them are moderately well known so that anyone with rooted objections to following the beaten track is not easily accommodated. One can reach the Little Kara Kul by three different ways and thence proceed west of the Muztagh Ata massif: or to the east of this there is the ordinary route by Yangi Hissar and the Chichiklik Pass, or a variation by way of the Karatash Valley which rejoins the ordinary route at Toile Bulung. But neither of these last two go near Muztagh Ata and since I much wanted to see the unexplored eastern side of the mountain I planned a roundabout deviation from the last-named route over the Karatash Pass and thence up the Tur Bulung nullah. At the head of this there is a pass marked on the map (Sheet 42 N, ¼ in.) with a query against it, which, if it could be crossed, would lead one down to rejoin the ordinary route at Chichiklik maidan.

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Accompanied by a Turki from Kashgar we crossed the Karatash Pass (16,338 feet) on ponies on September 17th in a fierce wind. The weather was, and continued to be, unsettled, so that I was disappointed of my principal hope of seeing Muztagh Ata close from the east. There were some yorts in the valley on the other side of the pass and to the south a glacier, covered with unblemished white névé, descended gradually from an easy-looking col. Had we been without baggage ponies it would have been tempting to embark on it to force a direct route to the south; instead, we went on down the valley past the Tur Bulung junction and as far as Kang Showar before we found any more yorts.

The Tur Bulung Pass was said to be unsuited to ponies so we sent them round by Little Kara Kul and Subashi, and ourselves, with a Kirghiz guide and a yak, went back up the Tur Bulung. Snow and heavy cloud prevented us from seeing anything but occasional glimpses of the 19,000-ft. eastern outlier of Muztagh Ata. Four miles up the Tur Bulung valley there is the snout of a big glacier of true debris-covered Himalayan type, quite unlike the clean white slabs of ice which spill over the gentle western slopes of Muztagh Ata like icing sugar on a bun. This glacier bore away south-west and then west into a wide bay, while the Tur Bulung stream, which we followed, comes down from the south-east from a wide upland valley—a hanging valley—a thousand feet or so above the glacier. Our guide called the glacier Kok Sel, which is also the name

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S ● 487 133 of a glacier of the Kungur group according to Sir Aurel Stein's map. This upper valley was well tenanted by Kirghiz at whose yorts we stopped that night just below the snow line.

The snow which fell that night obliterated all signs of the track, but in 2½ hours our guide took us unerringly to the top of the pass which he called Yambulak—not Tur Bulung. A glacier on the east side of Muztagh Ata is also called Yambulak. I guessed the height to be about 16,000 feet, and though the track is boulder-strewn, lightly laden ponies could cross the pass if clear of snow. From here we dropped about a S [233] thousand feet before climbing again to the Yangi Dawan which overlooks the Chichiklik maidan from the north. This great grassy plain lying at a height of 15,000 feet, in summer thick with grazing yaks, was now bare of life. It was a windy cold evening, so that we were lucky to find shelter in the squalid yort of a family who were trying to live like Kirghiz without the essential livestock. Their sole livestock were five sheep and they existed precariously on the bounty of stray travellers like ourselves. From here we reached Tashkurghan next day by the usual route down the horrible, bone-strewn Dershat defile.

S 487 Between Tashkurghan and Gilgit the seeker after variety is hard put to it. As a variation to the Mintaka Pass route, that over the Kilik Pass, by reason of nearness and similarity, hardly qualifies, while the only other alternative seemed to be a very generous sweep to the east by the Oprang Valley and back into the Hunza Valley by the Shingshal route. But if in order to avoid the usual I must indulge in wide generous sweeps, there was a more interesting one to be made to the west over the Wakhjir Pass and back into India by either the Irshad or Khora Bhort Pass and so down the Karumbar Valley to Gilgit. It was unfortunately true that this route entailed crossing a frontier as well as a pass—and frontiers are usually the more difficult—but I should not have to be on the wrong side of it more than two days before nipping smartly back to the right side.

From Mintaka Karaul, where there is the last Chinese post, we followed the main valley westwards, leaving the Mintaka and Kilik Passes on our left. It is a fine open valley, comparatively rich in grass but bare A 487 167 of life—deserted, one supposes, on account of its proximity to the Russian frontier. We crossed the Wakhjir (16,150 feet) on September 28th accompanied by some Kirghiz whom we had met a few miles below the pass. They had come there only the day before and were one of some thirty families who, we were told, were migrating to Chinese territory from the Murghab Valley east of the Chakmaktin lake on account of incursions and harryings by Kirghiz from the Russian side. We camped at a yort on the bank of the river less than two miles below the ice cave at the snout of the unnamed glacier which is, I think, accepted now as the true source of the Oxus.

A 361 [346] A 372 Between here and Bozai Gumbaz there were only a group of yorts on the south side of the river and a small homestead on the north bank where an attempt was being made to grow barley. "Gumbaz"—the conical mud cupola on a square base built in memory of some holy man—were far more numerous than people. There is peat on the flats on either bank of the river and many stacks of it drying were perhaps evidence of a

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larger summer population. After many weeks of yak dung fires, the delicious smell and the extra warmth of a peat fire were a welcome change. A 372

Bozai Gumbaz, near the junction of the Little Pamir River and the Ab-i-Wakhan, is a wide grass and gravel plain on which there is nothing but half a dozen *gumbaz*. We crossed the slow-flowing, muddy Little Pamir River to camp at the yort of the local Kirghiz chief two miles up the northern slopes. From here, according to plan, I should have crossed either the Irshad or Khora Bhort Pass back to India, but he that shuffles does not always cut and the Kirghiz chief, on whom I relied for a yak to carry my gear, ordained otherwise. Such an irregular route was not to be thought of; we must go to Sarhad where there was an Afghan post. A 487

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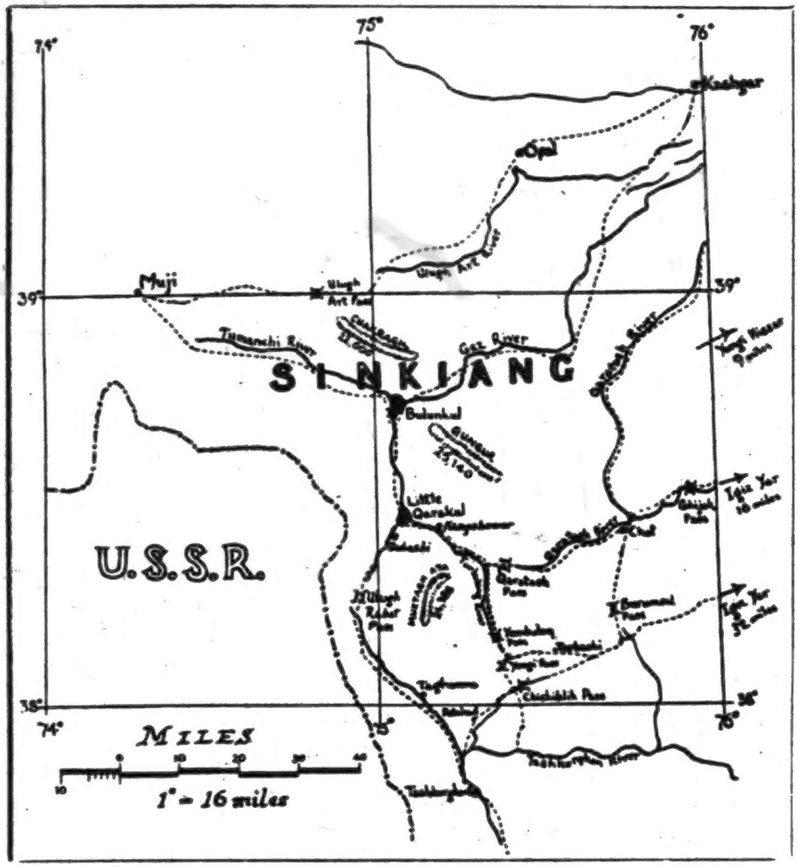
74°
75°
76°
Kashgar
Opal
Ulugh Art River
Muji
39°
Ulugh Art Pass
Tumanchi River
Gez River
SINKIANG
Bulunkul
25,146
Little Qarakul
U.S.S.R.
Qaratash Pass
Ulugh Rabat Pass
Chichiklik Pass
Igiz Yar 10 miles
38°
MILES
0
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1° = 16 miles

Between Bozai Gumbaz and Sarhad the Oxus flows through 40 miles of sterile gorge, interrupted only at Langar where there is a big grassy shelf and a small Tadjik settlement.

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At Sarhad the pent-up river breaks free and spreads itself over a wide, flat, sunny valley on the north side of which are a number of small villages.